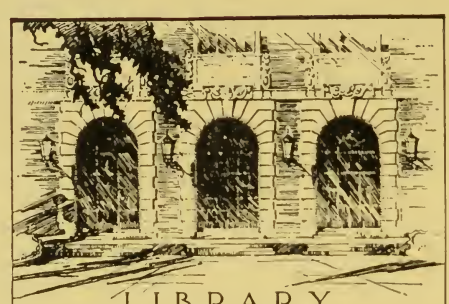

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WOOED AND MARRIED.

A Novel.

BY

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AUTHOR OF
"NELLIE'S MEMORIES," "WEE WIFIE," "BARBARA HEATHCOTE'S TRIAL,"
AND "ROBERT ORD'S ATONEMENT."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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WOOED AND MARRIED.

CHAPTER I.

CONCERNING COBWEBS.

ONCE upon a time there was a little old woman who essayed to sweep the sky free from cobwebs.

One dandles the children on one's knee with a laugh at the sing-song rhyme of the oft-repeated story, "Old woman, old woman, whither so high?"

After all, there is an odd sort of pathos, a parabolic excellence in these nursery stories. The cobwebs are nearer earth, to be sure; young brains get entangled in them; the old brooms will not sweep clean; the fine filmy threads intersect everything—to some eyes even the sky itself is not clear.

If Dymphna Elliott could have had her way there would be nothing unpleasant in life—sunshine without clouds, roses without thorns, cobwebs nowhere. This is how she would arrange matters: plenty of loving-kindness, no

stint of sympathy, a new system of largesse and almsgiving.

Impracticable, absurd!

Tangled among the cobwebs, indeed!

Of all visionaries, youth is the most fallacious; its very genius is abrupt, destructive, erratic. It moves in a cycle of its own devising—fixed orbits are its detestation; broken-up byways, forbidden thoroughfares, audacious short-cuts are better than the old paths. If it had its way, it would rather flash as a meteor through space than be dragged at the chariot-wheels of steady old Time.

Here are cobwebs enough!

Here is a young brain crying scorn on an old worn-out world, just tottering on to its six thousand years of sin and pain and weariness; youthful impatience and petulance striving to stamp out ancient landmarks, to obliterate old proverbs, to bring in the sunshine of a new creation.

Futile labour of a Sisyphus!

Ludicrous, but sad.

A thing out of its proper niche is always a pitiful sight. Young birds in strange nests, a drone in a hive of busy workers, a young face on the outskirts of a crowd, seeking kindness and protection in a world of staring sightseers, impotent childish pride opposed to cold shrugs and dignified repression—these are as sad as the rich gleaning of beautiful thoughts and warm affections scattered over an empty harvest-field.

Misunderstood!

What a whole world of pain and slow torture there is in that one word! One pronounces its syllables slowly and with reluctance. Dym once declared, in one of her reckless moments, that the word would be found engraven on her heart, as Calais was on the heart of an embittered queen.

Calais and Mary—misunderstood and Dymphna Elliott. Somebody else says, with a wise shake of the head, nothing but Temper—written in italics and with a big capital.

Some people cannot see their own cobwebs.

After all, one may have different opinions.

The little tribunal at present sitting on the Dymphna case are arriving at an adverse verdict; the jury are agreed, every man of them, and the poor old judge is beginning to settle his black cap with trembling hands.

It goes hard with some natures to arrive at any decision.

Mrs. Tressilian was one of these.

With her, procrastination was a reprieve. She loved to defer action, to live for ever in a region of possibilities and uncertainty. For one thing, she was never certain of anything but her own symptoms.

A foe to impulse, large and lymphatic of disposition, one read "hypochondriac" written legibly on her fair apathetic features, which were just now disturbed from their ordinary placidity.

She was deep in an argument with her daughter. And, as usual, having the worst of it.

Beatrix Tressilian was plaiutiff, jury, and counsel in her own person.

"Temper, my dear mother—temper, every bit of it."

"So you have said before, Beatrix. You know it makes me nervous to hear a thing repeated over and over again, as you have been doing for the last half-hour; and Dr. Richter only just gone, and my composing-draught not taken;" and Mrs. Tressilian, in real agitation, had recourse to her vinaigrette.

"My dear mother, we shall never arrive at any decision if you do not keep calm," replied her daughter coldly.

The scene was a sunshiny drawing-room somewhere in the region of Belgravia. A room unique as a triumph of upholstery, and tropical in temperature; a perfect miracle of satin, ormolu, and bric-à-brac; faint perfumes of rare Indian woods blending oddly with the cool fresh scent of roses and heliotrope; the centre figure of the whole, the tall girl in the riding-habit, who stands toying somewhat impatiently with her whip.

Take them all in all—irregularities, defects, and such small errata of Nature—in looking at Beatrix Tressilian you are looking at a lovely woman; but you must rest satisfied with this knowledge—there is little beyond.

Beatrix Tressilian is the centre figure of many a picture; a young goddess, whom few men would dare to elect as their household divinity.

A splendid young figure, too; yellow-haired as a Venus, and glowing with health and

vigour; grey-eyed, and as erect as an Amazon, with small white hands that can grip with a man's strength, with a mouth that can set itself closely in an immovable curve even when the lips smile. Such is Beatrix Tressilian.

In fairy tales the evil genius of the story is always some witch or hag or hideous old fairy, wizened of face and malevolent in temper. In the nursery, sin and ugliness always go together; it is only the grown-up children that can read that verse aright about "the angel of light." Dym was ever ready to aver that Beatrix Tressilian was the evil genius of her story. There were times, doubtless, when she thought the fiery oven or the red-hot shoes would be insufficient punishment. Her witch was yellow-haired and grey-eyed, but she was the cross old fairy godmother for all that.

"And you really think, my dear," began Mrs. Tressilian hesitatingly, in a slow full voice which had grown slower and riper with age—a voice which always seemed to flow on with sleepy modulation—"you really think, my dear, that we ought to reprimand Miss Elliott severely for such conduct?"

What a contrast between mother and daughter! Perfection of health and hypochondria—youthful severity opposed to the pitying leniency of age.

"Think? I am sure of it," returned Beatrix quickly. "I think it is our duty for Edith's sake to take decided steps at once—at once," with a meaning pause on the repetition.

"Very well," replied her mother fretfully; "but it is very unfortunate, just as Dr. Richter says I am to avoid unnecessary agitation; and I am sure it will agitate me dreadfully to send that poor girl away."

"Yes, it is unfortunate," assented Beatrix coldly; "but you ought to have taken my advice, mother, in the first instance. I told you Miss Elliott would never do for Edith; she is too much a spoilt child herself."

"I am sure I do not know why I should always be guided by you, Beatrix," returned Mrs. Tressilian, with an attempt at dignity, but failing lamentably, and relapsing into her fretful state. "I think it very hard that you can never get on with Edith's governesses; this is the seventh we have tried, and each one worse than the last. I am sure it must be your fault somehow; for she seems a harmless little thing enough, and very prettily spoken, too. I shall never forget how nicely she attended to me in my last nervous attack."

A scornful smile passed over Miss Tressilian's fine features.

"Always the same thing, mother. Because she acquitted herself handily in your sick-room she must prove an excellent governess for Edith, and all her sullenness and bad humours are to be forgiven."

"But she is never sullen with me, Beatrix—at least when you are not in the room; though I cannot deny she is a little abrupt and offhand

in her manner sometimes. But we must remember how young she is, Trichy."

"That is what I mean, mother; she is so absurdly young—not eighteen, I believe. Look at her and Edith together: why, they go on just like a couple of children, romping and laughing; but the moment I go into the room there is that odious black look, and the least remonstrance is met by impertinence or a shower of tears."

"I do think you are a little hard on her, Trichy."

Beatrix shrugged her shoulders; she was growing weary of the discussion. She always got her way in the end, but delay provoked her. She had made up her mind that her sister's governess was obnoxious to her, and not to be tolerated for a moment. Her mother's hints of mercy to the culprit had no effect on her; the soft wave of "the charity that endureth" broke unavailingly against her determination. Six governesses had already been dismissed from Lansdowne House; the fiat had already gone forth against the seventh—Miss Elliott must go. Miss Tressilian's will had always been the law in that house; "recommended to mercy" had never been her motto.

"Well, perhaps you are right, Beatrix," continued her mother, after another vacillating pause; and she drew the bone of contention—a blotted copybook—towards her with a furtive sigh. "After all, it was very wrong and silly of her to scribble all this nonsense in Edith's

book; it shows an ill-regulated and undisciplined mind at the best."

There they were, the few foolish sentences which had brought down the vials of wrath on Miss Elliott's devoted head.

Cobwebs, and dusty ones too.

A little scornful tirade drawn out of a girl's sad heart, and scrawled idly in a rounded school-girl's hand in an old copybook, blotted and half erased with tears:

"In the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and forty—I, Dymphna Mabel Elliott, being of sound mind, and in possession of all my faculties, do hereby set forth and solemnly declare, that life is nothing but a deceit and snare, made up of appearances without reality, beginnings with no end, efforts without success, disappointment and weariness always. And so endeth the first chapter of Dym's life."

And over leaf, just jotted down as a sort o bitter jest, verging on the pathetic, a fragment in the same girlish hand:

"DYM'S DIARY: A RECORD OF ONE WEEK.

"*A new sort of barometer, invented expressly for Will. Not an aneroid.*

"*Sunday.*—'In cœlo quies,' and nowhere else. Wind in the east; strong enough to blow out the altar lights; very chilly atmosphere.

"*Monday.*—An April day: plenty of sunshine and showers; sunshine predominating, rainbow tints appearing at intervals; towards evening one little star on the edge of a blue

cloud, signifying hope; no fogs or Will-o'-the-wisps.

"*Tuesday.*—A dead calm: all things at a low level; lights without shades; atmosphere sultry; temperature changing towards evening.

"*Wednesday.*—A fit of vapours early; in the afternoon a new edition of the play *Much Ado about Nothing;* a storm in a teacup; calm again towards evening.

"*Thursday.*—General fogginess; darkness within and without. 'Alas, poor Yorick!' alias Dym.

"*Friday.*—Gusty, and decidedly tempestuous; rapid oscillations of the mercury; atmospheric pressure; clouds drifting wildly; one little bark far out at sea, struggling among the breakers.

"*Saturday.*—Still in the deep waters; no lights ahead; no port in view; adverse winds blowing; all hands on deck."

And here was a great blot of tears.

Poor little cynic! and brought before such a tribunal, too. Here was a ruthless hand ready to sweep down cobwebs.

"Did you ever read such rubbish in your life, mother? There is plenty more farther on," continued the young censor severely; "but it is not worth wasting your time over it."

"I don't half understand it," returned Mrs. Tressilian helplessly.

"Of course you don't," interrupted Beatrix, in her magnificent voice of scorn. "Who could understand such crazed fancies? It is nearly

time for your afternoon nap," went on the wary young diplomatist. "Suppose I send Miss Elliott to you, as I pass the schoolroom. Edith is only practising."

"You wont leave me? You do not wish me to speak to her alone?" asked her mother in an alarmed voice.

Like other good-natured people, Mrs. Tressilian had a wholesome horror of scenes; she had conceived some kindly feeling towards the young girl whom chance had placed under her roof; and then, as she remembered Edith was so fond of her, what a pity, she thought, Beatrix had taken this fancy into her head! the two did get on very badly together; but she was not sure that Beatrix was not the most to blame; but for the sake of peace she must go. Beatrix could be stubborn, inexorable even, as her mother knew. Meanwhile the poor little culprit herself, as yet ignorant of the storm that awaited her, sat in the hot, close schoolroom, turning over the leaves of Edith's music-book, and trying hard not to give her instructions in a sharp querulous voice.

"Dear Miss Elliott, it is so hot," pleaded the child, "and I am so tired; do let me leave off. I am sure it is a good long hour since I began."

"Nonsense, Edie; how often I have told you not to be idle! You are very inattentive this afternoon. Hold your wrist lower, and go on with the scale in C minor." And as the child's rosy face lengthened perceptibly over the

petulant reproof, she continued in a milder voice: "you are so tiresome, Edie, and the weather is so hot"—an admission made in such a weary young voice that Edith stopped altogether in her playing to throw her arms round her governess's neck, with a penitent kiss or two.

"Couldn't we go in the park this evening? You look so pale; and I am sure a walk would do you good," went on the child coaxingly. But both child and governess started asunder, as though detected in some wrong, as the door was flung back, and Miss Tressilian stood on the threshold.

"Faugh, what an atmosphere! How often I have asked you, Miss Elliott, to open the window at the top as well as at the bottom; no wonder Edie looks so flushed. Never mind your scales for a moment, Edie; you were only talking when I came in. Mamma wants to speak to Miss Elliott."

Miss Elliott rose immediately, without a word. She was a slight pale girl, somewhat low in stature, and looking younger than her age, which, in truth, was barely eighteen, and with a sweet foreign-looking face, its clear olive complexion redeemed entirely from plainness by the bright clever-looking dark eyes.

Miss Elliott might have known what awaited her in the drawing-room by the sudden colour that flushed into her pale face as she hastily obeyed Miss Tressilian's summons; but it died away into ominous whiteness as, with much

prompting from her daughter, Mrs. Tressilian slowly and laboriously delivered herself of her summing up.

"I hope you are following me, Miss Elliott. You quite understand the various faults I am trying to point out to you?"

"I understand you perfectly," returned the girl, in an odd quavering voice; but the effort to speak made her cheeks burn again. You wish—that is, you think that I am not fit to teach Edith any more?"

"Yes, that is my mother's meaning," interposed Beatrix hastily.

"I never said she was not fit, Trichy," began Mrs. Tressilian reproachfully. "You are so harsh in your expressions. I only said, Miss Elliott, that considering all things, your youth, inexperience, and what my daughter considers your personal antagonism to her, that it would be better that, on all accounts, we should part."

"And you will really send me away?" cried the poor child—for she was little more than a child—in a frightened voice.

"I do not see I have any alternative," replied Mrs. Tressilian; and then, becoming helpless again in her pity: "You see, you are so young; hardly old enough for such a responsible position. My child's interests would suffer," she went on with a little dignity; but Miss Elliott interrupted her.

"Yes, I know; that is just what they all say of me. I am too childish, too silly, too ill-tempered; but I did try so to do my best.

And now Will will never believe that I did. And I am sure," in a broken voice—"I am sure Edie is fond of me."

A harder heart than Mrs. Tressilian's would have been moved to pity at the involuntary pathos of those simple words. The girl's flushed face, and voice choked with barely-repressed sobs, were eloquent pleading enough. A painful hesitation appeared on the lady's good-natured face, and if truth were to be told, her motherly soul yearned to comfort the young culprit before her; but Beatrix, who had hitherto held aloof, struck in here with her calm sarcastic voice.

"I don't see that Edith's fondness has anything to do with it, mother; a child always attaches itself to a playfellow; and with all consideration to Miss Elliott's good intentions, I think she was little more to Edith."

At the first sound of Miss Tressilian's voice, the young governess's manner wholly changed. She drew herself up, and pressed her hands to her eyes hastily, as though to force back the tears, while a proud sullen look came over her face.

"It was wrong, to say the least of it," continued Beatrix, in the same cold voice, "to write all that rubbish in Edith's book; wrong and childish in the extreme."

Here an indignant exclamation on Miss Elliott's part stopped her.

"I might have known this was your doing, Miss Tressilian. What have I done to you that you should become my enemy?"

"My dear, Beatrix meant no unkindness to you," exclaimed Mrs. Tressilian, alarmed at the angry gesture with which Miss Elliott possessed herself of the offending copybook; "it was very wrong and foolish to write those silly things. You know you are a little incautious in some things, my dear Miss Elliott."

"But no one had the right to read them," cried the girl, passionately; "no one—no one! It was mean, dishonourable. I did not think it of you, Miss Tressilian. Such a little thing as that, too, and to be turned against me."

"Miss Elliott, I cannot allow you to speak to my daughter in that manner."

"Why should I not speak to her? Has she ever given me a kind word or look? Has she ever remembered she is only a girl like myself? Ah, I may well call her my enemy; no one but an enemy could have done me this wrong."

Beatrix shrugged her shoulders slightly.

"I think Miss Elliott is giving you a tolerable proof of her temper, mamma."

"But who arouses that temper, Miss Tressilian? Cruel, cruel; and to think you are not much older than I. Let me go, Mrs. Tressilian. I would not stop here even if I were starving and had not a crust in the world."

"An amiable spirit in which to take reproof," muttered Beatrix, still more scornfully.

"I only said I was sorry because of Edith, and because"—faltering in spite of herself—"because it is so hard to go back and be a burden on Will. If it had not been for your

daughter," she continued, clasping her hands in mere anguish of recollection, "I think I should have begged and prayed you, dear Mrs. Tressilian, to let me stop on a little longer and try to do better. I have not been once cross this week, and Edith was getting so fond of me; and now he will look so sad when I tell him that I have come back to him again."

"My dear, I never meant that you should not stay out your month; and perhaps, if Beatrix does not mind, we might arrange something——" began Mrs. Tressilian soothingly.

"Not for the world!" cried the young girl, rising. "I know you mean kindly—you always do; but I have made up my mind now that I will not remain a day longer in this house than I can help. It is not your fault that I have been so unhappy here, and I never thought that we should part like this. But it is better so—much better so;" and fearful of breaking down again in the presence of her enemy, the young governess hastened from the room.

"What do you think of your protégée now, mother?" exclaimed Beatrix triumphantly, when they were left alone.

"I am sure I don't know, Beatrix," returned her mother peevishly, and half crying; "only you have both made me ill between you;" and seeing that her mother was really too agitated to pursue the question, Beatrix very adroitly turned the subject.

Meanwhile Miss Elliott, after retreating with

some dignity from the room, was indulging herself in a very hearty and unromantic fit of crying in her own little garret upstairs—a room which had always gone by the name of the governess's room, and which had been pronounced by Miss Tressilian to be good enough for the purpose.

In fairy stories the poor little heroine is always the occupant of a garret, unless she sleeps among the cinders, as that world-renowned kitchen-wench Cinderella did. The intermediate floors—the state rooms, with their hangings and canopies—are always devoted to the harsh step-mother or the cruel sisters. In this sort of literature startling contrasts are the chief glory of the tale—plenty of ashes to begin with; cloth of gold, hundreds and thousands of spangles, a wonderful glitter and sheen to embellish the end.

This poor little Cinderella dwelt like a fairy princess in her garret; its sloping whitewashed walls were as dear to her as Beatrix's pink and white draperies were to her in the room downstairs. What wonderful dreams she had here! From the window she could see the park, a strip of green lying somewhere on the confines of the sunset; behind the grand houses opposite she could catch glimpses of a wonderful panorama, fleeting views of great red and golden clouds, waves and billows of light. The old boxes piled up under the window made a throne fit for a queen. Here Dym would sit in the twilight for hours, while Edith, in her silk or gauze frock,

was dancing about the still empty drawing-rooms. Sometimes she could hear the laughter and the rustle of dresses as the ladies came up the stairs. She would hide sometimes in a dark corner on the landing below and watch them, as one watches a flock of strange birds. What wonderful plumage, she thought; what white throats and queenly heads! She would shrink back ashamed as the tallest and queenliest of them all passed her. "How well she looks! People with yellow hair ought always to wear sea-green," she thought, as she slipped away again to her throne among the boxes.

Sometimes she would come back to her place with hot cheeks and wet eyes, and when the music began stop her ears and cry softly. "It is not right. Why should one be so different?" she thought. "I suppose if the want were not here I should not feel it so. I wonder if all governesses are so lonely and sad as I. Will will say it is my fault, and that I ought to make myself happy. He would not like me to be sitting up here looking at the stars, and feeling so out of tune with it all. O Will, Will, if I could only have a good talk with you now!" And Dym's tears would flow again.

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself, sitting all in the dark, and with the window wide open too?" cries Caroline, running in with a stream of light and good-natured bustle. "Why, you aren't more than a child yourself, Miss Elliott. And such a nice little supper as I have served for you in the schoolroom! A little bit of chicken hot,

and a meringue as I have stole from James himself as he was carrying the tray down."

"Thank you, Caroline; you are very good," says the poor little governess very humbly, and drying her eyes.

Somehow the schoolroom, with its shady lamp and great armchair, and the cozy supper, seem to lift a little of the burden off her; she does not scorn the meringue, which Caroline pronounces so as to rhyme with syringe. Many a time has Caroline's good-tempered face and rough-and-ready kindnesses banished the dark cloud. "Thank you, Caroline; you are very good, and it does look comfortable," she would say again; and she would eat her supper gratefully, and forget the grand dresses downstairs, and that she was only a poor little Cinderella of a governess.

Dym did not always have such sad thoughts. Sometimes her garret might have been an enchanted palace, she peopled it so grandly. What castles she built there! what marvellous snatches of poetry and prose she compiled! The girl's mind was in that state of transition when it was obliged to find an outlet for itself.

Young people run this sort of gauntlet once in their lives; they arm themselves with all sorts of fancied powers, and ride full tilt against circumstance. This phase is to some existences what childish ailments are to the physical constitution; they go through it as a child goes through whooping-cough or scarlatina. No one is to blame for it—they themselves least of all. It is a healthy outlet, nothing more. These embryo

poets, novelists, and artists indeed turn for the most part into very practical matter-of-fact people; only a few refuse to lay down their childish arms. By-and-bye we shall see them harnessed in statelier panoply, and rushing down into the arena to do battle to the death. Bring laurel and bay to encircle the brows of the conquerors, and peace and a decent grave to the vanquished!

Dym's crude efforts were chiefly rhymic—small adaptations of thought and measure in the Barrett-Browning style, very flimsy of structure, full of startling paradoxes, and hardly recognisable by the great ideal. Dym gave it up after a time, and settled down to the sober prose of her own life. It did no great harm—it served to pass away a good many lonely hours; but I think she was a sadder and better woman when she could utter Mrs. Barrett-Browning's "valediction" with her heart, instead of seeking to reproduce a feeble imitation with her brain.

Nevertheless, with some exceptions, the hours in her garret were Dym's happiest ones.

Poor Dym! it was a sad enough face that she brought there after her interview with Mrs. Tressilian. Wounded pride, anger, and fear throbbed in the girl's sore heart as she sat on the edge of her little bed when her first burst of anguish was over, with the tears rolling down her cheeks one by one.

Into what bitter earnest her poor little jest had turned! She was struggling among the breakers, indeed.

"I did try to do my best, Will, I did indeed," she kept saying, speaking out loud in her agitation; "but who can keep one's temper with her? I wonder if you will believe it—if you ever do believe it of me," she continued, with a gesture of despair, walking hurriedly to and fro, as though some thought had made her restless. "I know I behaved very badly at that school, and that I might have got on better with Miss Northcote; but I did mean to do my best here." And then, with a fresh burst of grief, "But to think of my going back to be a burden to him again, dear old fellow! I have always been more a care than a comfort to him; and he so ill and overworked too. Ah, if mamma were only alive, and I could put down my head on her lap and tell her how good I meant to be, and how I have failed! Will will never believe me." And so on, till the poor child's head ached with the intensity of her misery.

By-and-bye a new thought seemed to strike her; and with a desperate sort of movement, as though she feared courage would fail her, she sat herself down to write to this same unknown Will. The tears came again and again as she did so; but she dashed them away impatiently, and only went on the faster.

"My own dearest old Will Conqueror,—I only hope you will make this out; but I have been crying so that I can hardly see plain. How can I help it when I am so miserable?—

"miserable" rendered illegible by a great tear-blot.—O Will, what will you say? I am dismissed again from my situation. Mrs. Tressilian told me I must go this afternoon, and I have been crying ever since. I am so afraid that you will not believe that I meant to do my very best this time. How can I help being young and silly, and all the horrid things they called me, when I shall not be eighteen for another month? People expect too much of me; and it was unkind of Miss Tressilian saying they did not want a playfellow for Edith—and so unfair, too, when Mrs. Tressilian said when she engaged me that my age did not matter at all, as Edith was still delicate and must not study much, and she wanted a cheerful young person who could amuse her.

"And, Will dear, I have tried so hard to do my duty. I have not been nearly so cross as I was at Miss Northcote's, and I have broken myself of all the silly habits that used to annoy Mrs. Saunders so. I daresay I did behave very badly then, and I am afraid Miss Northcote was right when she told you I encouraged her girls to break the rules; but you know I never could bear school, and I am sure I am quite staid and prim now. And, Will, I really have tried to get the better of my temper. I am sure I cannot have been so cross, or Edith would not be so fond of me. She has been like a little sister to me for kindness and goodness. If it had not been for Miss Tressilian's sneering speeches I should have been quite amiable; but you cannot

think how she goads and irritates me—she is as bad to me as a red rag is to a bull.

"But what is the good of my saying all this? I know you will just shake your head and say, 'You know it is your own fault, Dym;' and it is this that makes me so mad. I cannot bear coming back to you again like a bad penny. I always have been a burden to you, dear old Will, and it hurts me so to think it. I know I shall cry night and day till I see you. And, Will, do try and believe the best of me. I might have done better, of course, and I need not have made myself so disagreeable to Miss Tressilian; but if you only knew how provoking she is! Do write a word to me, there's a dear old fellow, and tell me you know I tried my best.—Your loving and sorrowful little sister,

"DYM."

And when she had finished her letter, she just read it over, sighing as though her heart would break; and then, with a muttered, "What is the good of giving him a month's pain in advance?" she tore it up into little pieces and scattered them on the roof, where a few deluded sparrows mistook the white fragments for crumbs.

That was the way in which Dymphna Elliott faced her heaviest troubles.

The cobwebs were not swept away yet.

CHAPTER II.

KIDDLE-A-WINK INTRODUCES HIMSELF.

SOMEWHAT later in the evening Dym crept down to the schoolroom very red-eyed and subdued, and very much ashamed of herself for keeping the schoolroom tea waiting. Edith would be tired and very cross with her long fast, she thought with a good deal of compunction. Edith was not there, however.

The schoolroom was a long narrow slip of a room—evidently an after-thought of the architect—but pleasant, and well lighted by two windows; the door stood open, and the evening sun streamed on the small round tea-table, which Caroline had set out with more than her usual liberality and love of good things; but before Dym had more than time to wonder at the unusual display of preserves and cakes, a very small grey dog—the very smallest and wiriest of Skye terriers that she had ever seen—ran at her with a short howl of surprise, and then suddenly sat up on his hind legs and begged. This was startling, to say the least of it, but it was far more so to find that the dog was not the sole occupant of the room. A very tall man, in a

dark-tweed shooting-coat, was leaning against the mantelpiece, in that embarrassing position which only brought a pair of very broad shoulders and the back of a curly head into prominent notice; for the owner of these shoulders was looking intently at the green and gold shavings with which the grate was encumbered.

Miss Elliott might be forgiven for the surprise that kept her immovable in the doorway, while the little Skye terrier sat up and waved its paws at her in dumb friendliness; for no form of mankind, no brothers or cousins, were ever know to cross the threshold of the schoolroom.

The young cornet of Dragoons, Charlie Tressilian, only honoured his sister and her governess with a good-humoured nod when he met them on the stairs or about the Park. He vouchsafed a curious glance once, when he first came upon Dym in her little close bonnet. I suppose the olive complexion and dark eyes of the little governess did not meet with his approval, for he never volunteered a second look. Not that Dym cared about it, though; there were plenty of these gay young officers about the house, in attendance on Miss Tressilian. Dym could hear the clanking of their spurs sometimes on the polished staircase when they came in from a dress parade, when she was hearing Edith her German verbs; "Miss Elliott," Edith would say archly, "when I grow up I shall marry Colonel Delaire; he is much the nicest of them; he has great yellow moustaches, and a beard that hurts when he kisses me. I don't think he

ought to kiss Beatrix so often, Miss Elliott, do you? She is quite grown up, you know, and the others don't do it."

"Hush! go on with your verb, Edith," says the governess, with a sigh; she thinks it must be rather nice to be Beatrix, and to have a colonel of her own. She catches glimpses of her sometimes, as she passes the drawing-room door, sitting at the piano in her white evening dress, quite surrounded by these young fellows. She knew the colonel Edith had spoken about; he was a pleasant, gentlemanly man, and had spoken very kindly to them one day when a great dog had frightened them in Kensington Gardens.

"Who is that little dark-eyed girl whom I meet so often in the Park with Edith?" asked the colonel, when he saw her passing by the open door.

"Oh, Miss Elliott, her governess," answers Beatrix indifferently; "it is a pity mamma has engaged such a dowdy little thing. You have turned over too quickly, Frank; I have two bars to play."

Old Dr. Schreiber, the German master, is the only masculine figure that ever crosses the school-room threshold; he wears a curious old wig and plaid waistcoat, and indulges plentifully in snuff. Dym hates him and his old-fashioned politeness and broken English compliments.

"Ah, you are a child of the South, Meess Elliott," he would say. "You have the Italian blood in your veins" (Dym's grandmother was

an Italian); "you are not cold and proud, like these islanders—they are ver great, but *ach Himmel*——" and the rest of the old man's rhapsody would be lost in a pinch of snuff.

Dym knew in an instant that the broad shoulders and the tweed shooting-coat did not belong either to Charlie Tressilian or to any of his brother officers—the brown curly hair looked sun-dried, and wholly unlike the trim closely-cut heads she remembered. Her little thrill of astonishment was followed by a long pause of indecision—how was she to address herself to this stranger? The back of a man's head does not conduce to conversation; it was difficult to go forward, and awkward to retreat. She did neither, but just coughed slightly.

"Ah, are you there, my little friend?" came in brisk amiable tones from the fireplace. "Have you told them I am dying for a cup of tea?"

Dym grew hot, and then felt inclined to laugh. At any risks, she must make him turn round.

"They have gone out to dinner; are you expecting Miss Tressilian, sir?"

At the first sound of the demure voice the arms dropped from the mantelpiece, and a brown-bearded face looked round in evident astonishment.

"Who in the name of wonder—I beg your pardon, but I thought my little cousin was here; I am afraid I was very rude just now; I did not hear you enter. Kiddle-a-wink, you rogue, just leave the lady alone."

Certainly the oddest person. A cousin—Dym had never heard of him. Stop; had not Edith talked often of a Cousin Guy? Perhaps this was he. What a tall man he was! big, too, and dressed in an odd foreign sort of fashion, with a blue handkerchief knotted loosely round his throat, the ends flying, and the very brownest face she had ever seen in her life, with dark quizzical eyes.

"I knew they were all out," he continued good-humouredly, as though to relieve her evident embarrassment; "the butler told me they had a dinner engagement. I know they are awfully gay people. Never mind me; I am used to disappointments, and they did not expect me. I only told Charlie I might look in one of these days."

"But you have not dined, Mr. ——" stammered Dym, more than ever convinced that this must be "the Cousin Guy," and longing with all her heart that Edith would come back.

"Guy Chichester, at your service," returned that gentleman, promptly answering the involuntary stammer. "I suppose I ought to have introduced myself before, as Edith is not here to do it for me. I believe I have the pleasure of speaking to——"

"I am only Miss Elliott, the governess," interrupted Dym shyly, feeling painfully conscious of her red eyes and pale cheeks, and wishing she had changed her shabby gown, a faded lilac gingham, for her usual afternoon black silk. She was not sure the quizzical eyes had not already

noticed these and sundry other defects. "Shall I go and tell Orton to serve you up some dinner at once?"

"On no account; I have already declined Orton's kind attentions. Edith has promised me a cup of tea. I suppose she will be back directly she has attended to the kitten's comfort. I found some young demons in the shape of boys stoning a little kitten, so I just dropped it in my pocket, much to Kiddle-a-wink's disgust, and brought it on to Edith to cosset and cuddle to her heart's content. I hope," with another kind inquisitive glance, "that Edith's governess will not resent my uninvited presence in her own sacred precincts."

"I am afraid Mrs. Tressilian will not like it," answered Dym honestly—she always spoke the truth, whatever it cost her; but her eyes said, "Edith and I will like it very much indeed."

"Oh, I will take the consequences of that," coolly sitting down, and drawing the dog's black muzzle into his hand. "Cousin Guy always does as he likes here." Then with a droll look in his eyes, "Doesn't Edith change her governesses very often? When I last had tea here, a funny little lady of fifty-five—Miss Dale I think they called her—poured it out for me, and the time before that I found a very stout widow lady in charge."

It was impossible not to laugh at Mr. Chichester's mischievous tone, and Dym did so very heartily, and then tried to look demure.

"You have not been a governess long," was

the next statement volunteered by this singular person.

"How can you tell that?" asked Dym, somewhat timidly.

"Why, you are not very old, to begin with; and, next, you have not learnt to look prim and demure without a perceptible effort. Wait till you are Miss Dale's age. Ah, here comes Edith, and with the kitten hugged up in her apron, I declare. Why, my fair Saxon, do you mean to lead me a cat-and-dog life after all? Look at Kiddle-a-wink's ears."

"O Cousin Guy," exclaimed the child, running up to him with her eyes full of tears, "one of those dreadful stones had hurt it after all; one of its paws was bleeding; and when we put the poor thing down, it just held it up, mewing dreadfully. Caroline says it is broken, and she has been trying to bind it all this time, only Kitty does cry so!"

"Who is Caroline? I don't think she is much of a surgeon. Do you call that a bandage?" asked Cousin Guy, in the good-humoured, half-cynical tone that seemed natural to him. "Hand over the victim to me." And in spite of the poor animal's plaintive cries, so trying to the nerves of Edith and her young governess, the brown shapely hands busied themselves with the wounded limb as tenderly and adroitly as would a woman's.

"There, I call that more respectable. Don't you think I ought to be appointed dresser to Guy's Hospital, Miss Elliott? Now put your

patient to bed, Miss Nurse." And poor pussy having been deposited in a large work-basket well lined with an old shawl, Mr. Chichester quietly suggested that he had not yet enjoyed his promised cup of tea; whereupon Dym moved to the table, feeling sorely puzzled as to what Miss Tressilian would think of these proceedings.

The whole affair, however, seemed no novelty to Cousin Guy; and as for Edith, she was in the seventh heaven of delight. Dym had now discovered for herself that Mr. Chichester was not an unfrequent visitor to the schoolroom, and this set her more at her ease. She was very quiet at first, and left the conversation chiefly to Edith; but Mr. Chichester appealed so frequently to her, and his drollery and *bonhomie* were so infectious, that Dym's mirth-loving nature could hardly hold out long; and she soon forgot her swollen eyes and shabby dress in listening to the pleasant sallies of their new companion.

Dym was in a perilous state between old pain and new pleasure; but she wisely put away her heart-ache, and determined to enjoy the present. What a wonderful break that evening was in the monotony of the schoolroom life! That any one should address her in tones of equality—nay, more, of interest—was novelty enough to our little Cinderella. The long narrow room seemed quite blocked up by the broad shoulders and big muscular figure, but it looked all the more cheerful for it. It was pleasanter to see Mr. Chichester pulling at his tawny brown

beard with his sunburnt vigorous hand than to watch old Herr Schreiber taking snuff. She sat on in a sort of dream, while Mr. Chichester cut long even slices of bread, or helped his little cousin to her favourite preserve, rattling on merrily all the time.

"Who was it who used always to be cutting bread-and-butter? Ah, Werther's Charlotte, I remember. I saw it parodied once. Have you ever read the *Sorrows of Werther*, Miss Elliott?"

Yes, Dym had. She had read it three times, and was ashamed to confess she liked it very much indeed. People thought it sentimental; she called it pathetic. Mr. Chichester looked at her with a comical frown of perplexity and amusement.

"You must be very young. I went through that sort of thing a dozen years ago," he went on in a rallying tone. "I am not much over thirty now. Do we all think Werther delicious at eighteen, I wonder? What can be the pleasures of melancholy, Miss Elliott, that youth is so desirous of enjoying them? It always seems to me that one has so much of the real thing in life."

"You are right," answered Dym in a choked voice. Her colour rose a little. Was it a chance hit, or had Mr. Chichester perceived her red eyes? "I think one likes it better in books," she went on, making a brave effort to recover herself and to speak naturally, "just as one enjoys the twilight or sad music."

Mr. Chichester smiled.

"Do you really think people do always enjoy them—elder people, I mean? I should fancy half-lights are rather a nuisance in some moods, and the sweetest music a "long-drawn-out pain," as some one calls it. But that is the worst of you women"—with a sudden frown—"you contrive somehow to extract a sort of enjoyment out of sorrow itself. Catch a sensible man listening to melancholy tunes in the twilight when things have gone wrong with him!" and he gave a little scornful laugh, and his tone struck Dym as somewhat bitter.

"I am afraid you think us very silly," she replied, timidly.

"I think you are all somewhat addicted to playing with edged tools," he went on, and his gravity was unmistakable. "I have heard from one of the old Fathers of the art of cultivating cheerfulness, but never of the cultivation of melancholy. Fogs should be dispersed at all hazards," he continued, but his eyes were twinkling again. "When women sit and spin trash in the moonlight, men go out and work."

"Too bad," was all Dym could find to say.

Mr. Chichester, who had successfully shaken off his sudden moodiness, looked at her a little curiously.

"Why," he asked, "have you never imagined yourself worse off than Nature and Providence intended you to be? Forgive me," he continued, in a lower voice, as Dym tried to find some answer; "I am afraid, after all, I am playing with edged tools myself. Edith, as we have

finished our tea, what do you think of asking Miss Elliott if you and I shall have a walk in Kensington Gardens?"

Edith clapped her hands gleefully, and then stopped herself.

"May not Miss Elliott go too, Cousin Guy?"

"Of course Miss Elliott may go if she wishes it," returned Cousin Guy, stroking Edith's flossy hair as he spoke.

"Certainly not. Edith, how could you think of such a thing?" exclaimed the young governess in a little flurry. "Mr. Chichester, please do not keep her out late; her chest is rather delicate, and it is so damp in those Gardens under the trees."

"Spoken as Miss Dale might have spoken it. I see there is hope of you yet, Miss Elliott. To hear is to obey. And we cannot tempt you to favour us with your company?"

"No, thank you, sir," replied Dym very gravely. She read, with the unerring instinct of a lady, why Mr. Chichester's invitation to herself was not very pressing. "Mrs. Tressilian would not like it, and you are quite able to take care of Edith without me."

"True, *noblesse oblige.* What tiresome things *les convenances* are, are they not, Miss Elliott? Here you are dying for a breath of fresh air. Nature says, 'Come.' Decorum, that cross-grained old jade, says, 'Stop at home.' Inclination has the worst of it as usual."

"I can get plenty of fresh air in the squares."

"And a fine opportunity for addressing an

ode to melancholy at the same time. Don't get spinning in the moonlight, Miss Elliott, while we are gone." Mr. Chichester's tone was so droll and sympathetic, that Dym could not take umbrage at it. "Edith, run and get ready, and don't stand staring at us so. Don't you know that only clever people can talk real nonsense?"

"I don't think Edith knows what real nonsense is," said Dym, rather sadly. "I try my best; but I am afraid one gets rather moped and cross up here."

"You ought to keep a bottle labelled 'Spirits,' on the mantelpiece, 'to be shaken as well as taken,' Miss Elliott. Have you ever tried a good game of battledore and shuttlecock when you were unusually cross?"

"No. What an odd idea!" replied Dym, laughing.

"You will find it a very good idea, and a most infallible remedy. I tried it once—kept up a cool two thousand with a little friend of mine; and after the unwonted exercise found myself, with blistered hands and refreshed spirits, quite in a state for a comfortable nap. Try it, Miss Elliott."

"Perhaps I will some time; you may recommend it to Edith too. I have passed 'the battledore and shuttlecock' stage, I am afraid."

"You mean you require more violent remedies. You are acknowledging a good deal, Miss Elliott. Has my fair Cousin Beatrix no power or spell to exorcise these spirits, 'black, or blue, or grey?' I

believe there is a system of freemasonry between girls."

"Not between us," replied Dym, drawing herself up proudly. If her life had depended upon it, she could not have helped the sudden sharp tone of dissent. She took herself to task for it afterwards. Mr. Chichester would think her so unamiable, she thought. She was not aware of the hard repellent look her face took at such moments, breaking up the soft outline of her features, and marring their pleasantness with bitter lines. Dym's face was a sadly eloquent one, ten times more eloquent than her words. It already told a volume to Mr. Chichester, if he cared to read it.

Dym never knew what he thought of her curt speech. He went away with Edith shortly afterwards, bidding her good-bye very kindly, but without offering his hand. Dym sat at the window watching them as they went through the square. What a grand-looking man he was, she thought; grander far than Colonel Delaire, or any of those young officers. He held his little cousin by the hand, and the child walked along, looking eagerly up in his face, and chattering to him. Dym could fancy him smiling in his beard, in his droll way, as he answered her.

"I should think he could make people afraid of him sometimes, with all his good nature," she thought, as they passed round the farthest corner and were lost to view. "How his eyes flashed and how annoyed he looked when he spoke of people indulging their troubles! I

don't fancy he has a good temper—not much better than mine. He must look like a lion when he is roused. Somehow his raillery has a pleasant sharpness, which does not hurt; while Miss Tressilian's sneers sting like nettles. I suppose he has a good heart, and that makes the difference," went on the young philosopher. She had quite forgotten her need of fresh air; or else exercise in the lonely deserted squares seemed else irksome to her. "After all, I am spinning in the moonlight," she said to herself, with something like remorse, as she put the schoolroom tidy, and then settled down to a piece of intricate knitting, which had to be partially unravelled and then put in order for Mrs. Tressilian. She cast an amused glance at the kitten now and then. Edith had insisted on a name being found for it, and there had been a perfect war of wits over the tea-table. Dym had suggested Tabitha; Edith thought Chance or Foundling more appropriate; but Mr. Chichester had insisted that nothing under three or even four syllables would do. A name must be hit upon that would perpetually remind them of the painful circumstances through which the victim had found entrance under their hospitable roof. Edith objected to the Howler, and thought Wanderer sounded too much like a race-horse; he would therefore, with their permission, fix on Lamentations as a peculiarly beautiful and touching name, a *sobriquet* to which poor Edith somewhat ruefully consented.

It was quite late before Edith returned, with her hands full of roses.

"Aren't these beautiful, Miss Elliott? Cousin Guy asked if you were fond of flowers, and he told me I must bring you home these, to make up for the walk you lost. He told me to tell you that they were ever so much better than moonshine. What did he mean by that, I wonder?"

"Mr. Chichester sent me these?" exclaimed Dym, hardly thinking she heard right. She laid her hot face against the cool fragrant heap that lay in her lap; the soft pinks and blush-tints gleamed pearly white in the semi-darkness; the gas-lamp at the corner of the dark square reflected the girl's bent head dimly.

"How dark it is! and I am ever so tired. Cousin Guy threatened to carry me once, and I was afraid he meant it. No, he did not send them exactly; he said it must be my present, in return for all the trouble I give you. Do I give you much trouble, Miss Elliott?" asked the child earnestly. "There was a girl sitting at the corner, just by one of the park gates: her basket was nearly full, and she looked so tired and hungry, Cousin Guy made her empty it into my lap, and we sorted the bunches under the trees. I don't think she ever had so much money in her life before; she went on wiping her eyes with her shawl, and wishing the heavens to be his bed. I could not tell what she meant, till Cousin Guy said it was only gratitude, and

that an Irish blessing did no harm; and then he told me to bring them all home to you."

"I see; thank you, Edith," returned Dym quietly. She laid aside the roses reluctantly, as Edith clambered into her lap and nestled against her. Her thoughts wandered two or three times as she strove to interest herself in the child's eager descriptions.

"Did Mr. Chichester come in with you, Edie?" she asked at last, rousing herself from a reverie.

"Yes—no; he only brought me to the door. I heard him say something to James about calling again later. I know he inquired what time they would be back. Do you know, Miss Elliott, Cousin Guy asked me how it was that you and Trichy got on so badly together."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Dym, starting. "Edie, you must have misunderstood your cousin."

"Well, perhaps he did not say so in exactly those words. He asked me if I liked you better than Miss Dale; and when I said a hundred thousand times better, he laughed, and asked if Trichy did too. Of course I told him no, and how miserable she made you whenever she came into the schoolroom."

"Well!" ejaculated Dym anxiously.

"I don't know whether he heard me, for he answered rather dryly, that it takes two to make a quarrel, and that Trichy might possibly be in the right sometimes; and when I said I was sure she never was, he scolded me for speaking so disloyally of my sister."

"And he was quite right," returned her governess severely. "You ought to have known better, Edith." Dym put a stop to the conversation quite peremptorily, by insisting that it was time for her little charge to go to bed. She turned a deaf ear when Edith pleaded for farther indulgence, and committed her remorselessly into Caroline's keeping, when that individual came to fetch her. Edith carried off some of the roses in revenge. Another time there would have been a playful scramble, but to-night her young governess was not in the mood. She contented herself with placing the remainder in water, and then sat down to her knitting again. "It takes two to make a quarrel," she said to herself, as she cast-off rapid stitches on her needle; and perhaps if Guy Chichester had seen the puckered brow and involuntary frown at this moment, he might have avowed he was right.

Some two hours later, as the carriage set down the two ladies at the door of Lansdowne House, a tall dark figure, lounging against the railings, started forward and assisted them to alight.

"Why, it is Guy himself, I declare!" exclaimed a sleepy affectionate voice from the interior of the carriage.

Beatrix volunteered no welcome. "Mamma is very tired," was all she said, as she leant lightly on her cousin's arm; and she swept past him up the steps in her white cloak. When they followed her into the inner drawing-room, they found her giving orders to her maid about closing

the windows and bringing up the coffee. "You will have some in your dressing-room as usual, will you not, mamma?"

"Yes, my dear, I think so; but I have not yet spoken to Guy. My dear Guy, whatever brings you here so late to night?"

"As usual, a whim, my dear aunt; but this is not my first visit. I have been well entertained by Edith, I assure you."

"You have been here all the evening?"

Beatrix looked up sharply.

"You had better ask him, mamma, how long he has been up in town," she observed, with a little *empressement*.

"Humph, my fair cousin; so that is the reason why your ladyship deigns to receive me so coldly," returned Guy, smiling mischievously. "Well, if I cared to evade your question, I could well do so. I have been in town—that is, at the West-end—some six hours, two of which were spent at Lansdowne House; and I have been six weeks in a place not fit to mention in aristocratic ears, but certainly not twelve miles from London."

"I thought so," came in disdainful tones from Beatrix. "Besides——"

"Besides what? Don't spare my feelings."

"You were seen——"

"How shocking!"

"There is nothing to laugh at, Guy. Colonel Delaire came in and told us one day he had met you."

"Indeed! Was it in the Seven Dials or Camden Town?"

"He did not mention the locality. He said you had your old shooting-coat on—I wish you would let me burn it—and looked rather as though you had fallen into the hands of the Philistines."

"My dear Beatrix, you know poor Frank was only laughing—you did look so shocked."

"Never mind, Aunt Celia; don't trouble yourself to apologize for me. Trichy knows I am a sad fellow—always in the hands of some Philistines or other; but it was mean of the colonel to show me up at headquarters."

"He thought we should be so pleased, dear Guy."

"What! at hearing I was in the hands of the Philistines. For shame, Aunt Celia!"

"I wish you would not go on joking, Guy. You know mamma is dreadfully tired."

"That means I am to be silent, and that you are to go to bed, auntie; what a capital policeman you would make, Trichy; your very tone would make people 'move on.'"

Miss Tressilian moved away somewhat displeased; it was never her way to retort on an impertinence; she held herself aloof quite stiffly, while Guy interchanged an affectionate good-night with his elder relative. Neither did she seem to see him till he took the seat opposite to her, and deliberately helped himself to some coffee.

"Where is Charlie?" he asked suddenly.

"At the Opera; he will be in by-and-bye."

"All right; I will look in on him to-morrow. I must not stay now, I suppose?"

"That's as you please. Mrs. Vivian will be down directly."

"How many tame cats do you keep about the house?" asked her cousin mischievously.

"Mrs. Vivian is a friend," returned Beatrix in her most repressive voice. "She is in trouble, poor thing! and it came into my head to-night that perhaps mamma might make it worth her while to stay on as Edith's governess."

"Edith has a governess, has she not?"

"Oh, yes—Miss Elliott; but she is going."

"Indeed," observed Guy, in the very driest of tones.

"Yes, she will not do at all. She will insist on having her own way in everything, and spoils Edith dreadfully."

"Edith seemed very happy, and much stronger in health, I thought."

"Ah, Mentone did us all good, mamma especially. Don't say a word to her about Miss Elliott's going, please. She is dreadfully infatuated on the subject, and I have had difficulty enough to make her see things properly. Miss Elliott is just the deceptive sort of person that can creep into any one's good graces."

"She has not crept into yours," muttered Guy.

"No, because I have perception enough to read her truly. I never knew any one more unfit for a governess; she and Edith waste half their time in childish romps."

"So much the better," was the gruff answer.

"And then she is so ill-tempered—a perfect little fury when provoked."

Guy shrugged his shoulders. "Under no provocation, I suppose?"

Beatrix bit her lip. "You are so tiresome, Guy; there is no talking to you."

"Confess, Trichy, you are a little hard on her."

No answer.

"And so the poor little thing must go?"

"If you cannot find anything more interesting to talk about, I shall leave you, Guy."

"Not before Mrs. Vivian comes, I hope. How nice you look to-night, Trichy, with all those green waves, and puffings, and white water-lilies! If I were an artist I would paint you as Undine."

"Or any other soulless being, I suppose," returned Beatrix, who, for some reason or other, was in an evident ill-humour.

"Ah, Undine got her soul afterwards; so will you, when you have an Huldbrand of your own. By-the-bye, what's this between you and Frank Delaire?"

Beatrix flushed up to her temples, and turned away.

"Ah, Undine, have I caught you?"

"Hush! here is Mrs. Vivian at last," as a brisk little widow, with dark restless eyes, and very airily attired, made her entrance. "You have been long enough making your appearance, Susan."

"I have been with dear Mrs. Tressilian. This is your cousin, Mr. Chichester—Oh, yes, I

remember him." But Guy, who was subject to sudden sympathies and antipathies, replied very curtly to the lady's effusive greeting.

"I suppose it is no use waiting for Charlie any longer; he has gone into supper somewhere," he observed, looking at his watch. "I have only ten minutes to spare, and you are tired, Beatrix."

"Not in the least. You know we are late people," was the careless answer, but she followed him into the outer room notwithstanding. On the threshold he stopped and took her hands.

"You had better tell me all about it," he said, with pleasant peremptoriness.

"About what?" But the tell-tale colour began to rise again.

"About Frank Delaire. Are you engaged to him, Trichy?"

"I don't see what right you have to ask me that question," she replied, trying hard to resume her former cold manner.

"What right! Am I not a man and a cousin?"

"I don't see what that has to do with it."

"Don't you?"

"I may choose to keep my own counsel."

"Well done, Undine."

"Besides," trying to disengage herself, "I cannot see how my affairs can possibly interest you."

"It is sufficient interest to me to know that an honest fellow's constancy is to be rewarded by my pretty cousin's hand."

"Pshaw! pray allow me to go back to Mrs. Vivian."

"Unhand me, sir; that was what you meant. There, you are free—only suffer me to make the remark that you are in a singularly unapproachable mood to-night."

A sudden glitter as of tears sprang to Beatrix Tressilian's eyes.

"Because I am too proud to repose confidence where none is returned. Why should you consider you have the right to question me about Frank, when you refuse to answer a single question of mine?"

"Frank! Now I am sure I have to congratulate you."

"Don't. I hate congratulations."

"But is it really so, Trichy?"

"I suppose so," in a half-proud, half-melancholy voice.

"Dear Beatrix, I am so glad," replied her cousin, affectionately. "Frank Delaire is a capital fellow, and——"

"And what?"

"He will have an awfully pretty wife." But Beatrix drew back with almost a defiant gesture.

"Don't, Guy. I will not have you say that."

"Why should I not say it?"

"Because—I don't know! what are my looks to you? There, let us change the subject."

"With all my heart. Good night, Trichy."

"Good night. I suppose," catching her breath quickly, and not looking at him—"I

suppose you are not rid of the old delusion yet, Guy?"

A quick contraction of the brow and a look of pain before Guy Chichester answered, "No, nor ever shall be;" and then somewhat abruptly he bade his cousin good night.

CHAPTER III.

A HEADACHE AND A MYSTERY.

AFTER that Mr. Chichester seemed to have taken up his abode at Lansdowne House.

Miss Elliott soon became aware of the fact; his visit was a sad hindrance to Edith's studies. True, he never again invaded the schoolroom, but Edith was sent for perpetually to bear him company in all sorts of walking and driving expeditions. Edith must go with them to the Royal Academy, or to some water-colour exhibition; she accompanied them to concerts or morning visits to the various studios of his artist friends. Cousin Guy would not hear an excuse or word of remonstrance; no party of pleasure was formed without her. Why should not the child be amused as well as they? The governess wondered what Miss Tressilian thought of it.

Miss Tressilian said very little to any one at this time. She swept past the governess once or twice, looking prouder and sterner than ever. Dym saw her once standing in the embrasure of one of the hall windows, looking out with a very dissatisfied face, just after Mr. Chichester had

ridden away with his little cousin from the door. Edith looked back and waved her hand to her sister, but Beatrix vouchsafed no response. The child looked a pretty picture in her blue habit, with her fair hair streaming down in the sunlight. She laughed aloud with delight as her white pony curveted and champed at his bit.

"What wonderful manes you both have!" observed her cousin, smiling. "Does Miss Elliott groom yours?"

"No; Caroline, of course. Is she not a beauty, my pretty Fanchette? Trichy, you had better have come with us, it is such a lovely day."

Beatrix turned away without vouchsafing an answer, and Miss Elliott was struck by the lowering look of discontent on her face as she slowly ascended the stairs.

Dym gained a curious insight into things by-and-bye; the child's artless prattle told her much—Cousin Guy and his wonderful sayings and doings were the constant theme of her conversation in the schoolroom. Dym tried to divert her mind into other channels, but soon gave up the attempt in despair. Edith would talk of nothing but her hero.

Cousin Guy had a great house; she had seen it once when she was a very, very little child. Mamma and Beatrix had taken her, and they had stayed a long time. Only Beatrix had quarrelled with Aunt Constance.

Who was Aunt Constance? came involuntarily from Dym's lips.

Oh, she was Cousin Guy's mother. Cousin Guy lived with her. Edith could not remember the name of the place; they always spoke of it as the Happy Valley. Was it not Rasselas who lived with his brothers in the Happy Valley? Cousin Guy had a great black horse named Mahomet; he always had jokes about him, and said he had a great respect for the Prophet; and he had called his beautiful Scotch collie Kelpie; was that not a funny name? And one of these days, when Beatrix was married, they were all going to stay up at Ingleside—that was the name of his house.

"Why not before?" asked Miss Elliott, rather curiously. She was growing a little weary of it, but somehow it interested her; was it because it took off her thoughts from her own sad life, she thought. Edith opened her eyes very widely at the question, and shook her head in a wise way.

Oh, Trichy wanted to go very much, but Cousin Guy had not asked her; they were not to come till she was married, and then Colonel Delaire would come too. Cousin Guy had told her a great secret—that Beatrix and Colonel Delaire were to marry each other. Did Miss Elliott know it; and was that the reason why Beatrix was never allowed to ride with any one else? She wanted to go with them the other day, but Cousin Guy would not allow it, and told her to wait for Frank. "I am sure," finished the child, thoughtfully, "that she likes Cousin Guy best."

"Hush, Edie; what a dreadful idea!" began Miss Elliott reprovingly. "My dear child, do you know what you are saying?"

"But, Miss Elliott, I am sure of it. Trichy minds every word Cousin Guy tells her, and she is always contradicting Colonel Delaire. Guy says she snubs him dreadfully—he made her cry once when he was scolding her—and he will call her Undine before them all, and that makes her angry; she is always cross now when he is not in the room."

"Really, Edith, I cannot allow you to go on talking in this manner. Get out your lesson books; we are getting into dreadfully idle ways." And somewhat awed by her governess's unusually austere manner, Edith for once obeyed in silence.

But after all there were very few lessons done. Miss Elliott spent most of her time in solitude; she sat alone by one of the schoolroom windows the greater part of the day, busied over a heap of white drapery. The garret with its throne of boxes was forsaken. She preferred the long narrow window that looked down into the square; she used to watch them mount or dismount, or drive away gaily equipped for an afternoon in the park. Heaven knows what restless fancies filled the girl's head as the heavy barouche rolled from the door; in her vague way she was composing another sorrowful "Song of the Shirt;" she drew her needle out sometimes with an impatient sigh. "How dreadful it is to be young and to want things!" she would say to herself. "How can Will—how can any one

understand? Is it wrong to have the want, I wonder? What was that he said? 'When women sit and dream, men go out and work.' I would rather be a man, of course; women have much the worst of it in everything; they cannot get away from themselves somehow."

Some one speaks of the divine hungers of the soul; there is surely a parching draught of thirst likewise. Young things crave hungrily to be satisfied, the bread and salt of life does not suffice them; they want the leeks and the cucumbers of Egypt—they demand pleasure as a right, fruition as a recompense.

Existence without its complement of gratified wishes is but a bare crust, which they take thanklessly from the All-Father. Youth often looks at death fearlessly, while age quails at it. With what mighty mysteries and awful questionings it dares to concern itself, as a child plays in the sunshine at the edge of an abyss! The Unknown, the Terrible, the Imaginative—these are what fascinate the neophyte, while it shuns the real actual joys of the present.

Dym's better nature, her own rational self irrespective of cobwebs, was to be brought into play by-and-bye.

Edith had talked a great deal about a grand picnic that was to be held in Beatrix's honour—the officers of the regiment had got it up. They were to drive down to Richmond—Colonel Delaire in his four-in-hand, and the ladies in open carriages—and there was to be luncheon in the park, and a grand dinner at the Star and Garter.

UNIVERSITY OF

A little daughter of one of the officers was to be there, and it was decreed by the reigning powers, Beatrix and Cousin Guy, that Edith should bear her company.

Edith was of course in a transport of delight from morning to night; she was to have a fresh toilette for the occasion—Madame Laroche, Beatrix's dressmaker, was to furnish it. When the day arrived she came running into the schoolroom to show herself—a little golden-haired princess all in rose-coloured clouds.

Miss Elliott gave a heavy sigh when the little apparition vanished from the door. She had not the heart to take up her usual station by the window. The schoolroom looked dark and close; outside the sun was shining, the birds sang in the garden of the square, the horses pranced gaily up and down before the house; there was plenty of light giddy laughter—a band broke into thundering music—a party of happy equestrians cantered by.

"I wonder if I shall ever be allowed a little enjoyment?" murmured poor Dym with tears in her eyes as she moved away. "I suppose I ought to be glad to have a whole long day to myself undisturbed. How hard it is to be good and mind what Will says! my poor Will, who never has a day's enjoyment in his life. There, I will try to be good and do the first disagreeable thing that comes to hand."

And as Dym arrived at this laudable determination, she bethought herself how often Miss Tressilian had wanted her help in sorting and

arranging her music, and resolved to do it this time unasked.

The great drawing-room was almost oppressive in its perfumed heat and stillness; the door leading to the conservatory was open, and the fragrance of the flowers was almost overpowering. In the bustle the servants had omitted to open the window, and the outer blinds were not closed; the sun streamed in on the satin couches and gilded mirrors. Dym, in her dark gingham dress, looked the only speck of shadow as she moved noiselessly hither and thither, picking up here a geranium leaf and there a pair of light gloves crumpled and thrown down; a pale-blue scarf lay on an ottoman, a white-lace parasol was tossed down on a distant table—relics of the gay party.

Dym took it up and examined it with almost childish pleasure. "How nice to use such beautiful things!" she thought; but she dropped it with a startled movement as slow uncertain steps came up from the conservatory, and to her astonishment Mr. Chichester's broad shoulders filled up the doorway.

Dym could not help a little cry of surprise.

"You here, Mr. Chichester! Have you not gone with the others?"

"It appears not," he returned dryly. "Miss Elliott, I am ashamed to trouble you; but would you mind pulling down some blind or other, and shutting out that horrible glare? I have the most confounded headache;" and he threw himself down on a couch that stood near him, with

such an expression of suffering that Dym looked at him with some perplexity and trouble.

"Are you ill, Mr. Chichester?" she inquired timidly, for the brown-bearded face had a livid look on it that frightened her.

Mr. Chichester opened his eyes impatiently at the question.

"Only this infernal—I beg your pardon, this horrible headache. I had a slight sunstroke once—ugh!" the monosyllable evidently wrung from him by a fresh access of torture. "Oh, that glare!" he repeated in a voice that quickened Dym into sudden activity.

Dym understood all about it now, and was ashamed of her needless question. She closed most of the outer blinds and threw open windows and doors till a refreshing current of air rewarded her efforts; she even moved away a vase of flowers that stood near him.

"I know all about these headaches," she said very softly, but with some natural hesitation. "I have often treated them. I think I can give you a little relief, if you will let me."

Probably Mr. Chichester was past answering, for he merely moved his lips in assent without opening his eyes.

"I have never seen Will look quite as bad as that," she thought, as she hurried off to Mrs. Tressilian's room in search of handkerchiefs and eau-de-Cologne. She stood by him with almost professional gravity as she changed the cool fragrant cloths every moment.

"I could never get ice for Will," thought the

poor little sister; "there, I think he is beginning to feel a little relieved already," as the deep furrows of pain relaxed and smoothed themselves out.

What an odd position! Dym gave a comical little smile once at herself. Was it right? Ought she to have sent for any assistance? Would Miss Tressilian blame her? Would Mr. Chichester himself think it strange when he once fairly roused from this trance of suffering? Dym had not time to think it out. A groan from her patient seemed to rebuke such worldly-wise caution. "We must do as we would be done by," she thought stoically; "it can never be wrong to relieve pain. Will calls it a woman's mission." And emboldened by this last thought, she even ventured to lift the brown clenched hands and moisten the hot palms, and then went on steeping the handkerchiefs in iced water, with all the better heart that they needed now to be less frequently changed.

It is impossible to tell whether nursing is ever really to be taught or acquired, but it is certain that the instinct is born in some women. Dym Elliott had not served an apprenticeship to the sick-room; she had rarely seen people ill; in most cases she would have been ignorant of all remedies, nevertheless it came naturally to her to move noiselessly and speak softly. The small nervous fingers had an exquisite touch of firmness and sympathy; they lay so lightly on Guy Chichester's throbbing nerves that he scarcely stirred under them, and though still

suffering too much to speak, the heavy frown of pain lessened perceptibly.

A strange stolen sense of pleasure crept into Dym's mind; it was so sweet to be useful, and to feel her services were needed by any one; it made her feel less lonely, and more akin to the outer world—to be allowed to minister suffices some women. She smiled quite happily when she found, at the end of an hour, that he had fallen into a refreshing sleep. She sat behind him, fanning the flies away and making a soft current of air round him. The silence, the heat, the fragrance, the continued movement lulled her into all manner of pleasing reveries. At the first sign of awakening she crept away and begged Caroline to make one of her cups of delicious coffee, and then came back and administered it with the same old-fashioned gravity.

Mr. Chichester glanced at her rather drolly over the rim of his cup; he looked his ordinary self again, only very pale, and there were dark lines under his eyes.

"Where have you learnt to cure people, Miss Elliott? Have you some wonderful power to charm away headaches?"

"I have seen my brother suffer in the same way, but he never looked quite as ill as you did," returned Dym, quietly; "and you must not talk now," she added, as she shook up his pillow and carried away his empty cup. "There is the handbell near you, Mr. Chichester, and I shall send up James with some luncheon presently.

I should try and go to sleep again if I were you."

"Are you going to leave me then?" observed Mr. Chichester, raising himself on his elbow; but whether Dym heard or not she had already disappeared, and when he woke up from a second refreshing nap the promised luncheon had arrived, a fact which Kiddle-a-wink notified by jumping on him and licking his face to arouse him.

Miss Elliott had a second patient before night. The long excitement and drive in the hot sun had been too much for Edith, always a delicate child; towards evening she had flagged, and, to her mother's alarm, feverish symptoms appeared. Mr. Chichester had sufficiently recovered from his indisposition to meet the returning party at the door. He received his little favourite in his arms, and after looking in her face with undisguised anxiety, quietly carried her upstairs, and begged Caroline to summon Miss Elliott while he sent for a doctor.

"There is not the slightest occasion, Guy," remonstrated Beatrix, who had followed him, and now stood by the bedside in her gay dress, looking down at her little sister. "Edith often has these feverish attacks, and Caroline knows exactly how to treat them. If mamma wants a doctor, well and good; perhaps it is safest to be cautious in such cases; but there is not the slightest need to disturb Miss Elliott."

"Are you going to sit up with her yourself then, Beatrix?"

"My dear Guy, after this fatiguing day surely you would not ask such a thing."

"No, I think Miss Elliott would be the proper person; she seems fond of the child."

"So is Caroline."

"Perhaps so. I have no doubt Caroline is a most valuable person, but I have a strong dislike to leave children to the tender mercies of any servant," persisted Mr. Chichester, with a touch of displeasure in his voice. "If neither you nor Miss Elliott sit up with the child, I shall remain here myself."

Beatrix's sole answer was a scornful toss of the head as she turned away. Evidently she resented her cousin's interference, but was powerless to oppose him. Mr. Chichester waited a moment till he saw Miss Elliott enter the room, and then he followed his cousin downstairs. Dym gave a little start of surprise when she saw him; but he took no notice of her, and very soon both she and Susan were absorbed by their little patient, who was manifesting all a child's restlessness and impatience. The doctor did not make his appearance till late, and then spoke very vaguely. It was the heat—she had been over-excited lately—the brain, a very sensitive one, had been over-wrought—something or somebody had evidently disturbed her; but, after all, it might only be a recurrence of the old attacks—they must keep her quiet, perfectly quiet, and free from agitation—he had always warned them against any form of excitement for her.

Dym, as she felt the child's throbbing pulses, thought Cousin Guy's good nature might probably work fearful mischief. It was very difficult to enforce the quiet that was recommended. Edith would talk; she pillowed her hot head on her governess's arm, and babbled on endlessly of the green park, and the sunshine that made her head ache, and the champagne that some one made her taste; and then wandered on confusedly about something she had overheard that morning; some one—she thought it was Trichy—had said Miss Elliott was going away—yes, she was sure it was Trichy; it was just like her ill-nature. Was Miss Elliott going? She must not—oh, she must not; and here Edith clung to her and became so excited that Dym grew quite alarmed, and begged Susan to go down and see if her mother or sister was still awake and could come to her.

Susan came back after some delay, and the expected aid arrived in the form of Mr. Chichester, who hastily explained that after the doctor's favourable bulletin he had persuaded his aunt and cousin to retire to bed, as they were dreadfully fatigued with the day's excitement, and that he was only sitting up himself an hour or two in case anything should be required.

Dym thought of his day of suffering, and wondered at his imprudent self-forgetfulness. She drew back into the shadow of the curtain as Edith stretched out her arms delightedly to her cousin. It was curious and touching to see the intimacy between the child and the man, they

both so evidently understood each other. Guy Chichester sat down on the edge of the bed, and fondled the little hot hands that stroked his beard.

"Well now, Edith, what's the meaning of all this disturbance? Why don't you lie still and go to sleep as a good child should? You are not half so obedient as Kiddle-a-wink."

"Because I can't, Cousin Guy," moaned the child. "It is so hot and I'm so restless; and, oh dear, whatever made Trichy say such a thing?"

"You ungrateful little mortal! and Miss Elliott has been fanning you for the last hour. Come now, what did Trichy say? Some of her nonsense, I expect."

"Oh no, it is all true; Caroline says it is. Cousin Guy, wont you go and ask mamma and Trichy not to let Miss Elliott go away? They say she has only another fortnight, and that that dreadful Mrs. Vivian is to come; and, oh dear, I do love Miss Elliott so!"

Mr. Chichester gave a low whistle.

"Whew! that is what is troubling the small head and making it so hot, is it?"

But Edith stopped him appealingly.

"Oh, do, Cousin Guy, do make them not send her away! You can't think how nice and kind she is, and she does not want to go—do you, Miss Elliott?"

Dym came forward in much distress.

"I do not know who has been telling her. It is a great pity; I knew she would go on in

this way. Edie dear, you must be good about it. Don't you think your mamma and sister know what is best for you?"

"It is not mamma; it is Trichy!" cried the child vehemently. "You know Trichy hates you, and makes you cry. It is she who is sending you away. Ask Caroline. O Cousin Guy, you can always make her do what you like; do, do make her promise to keep dear Miss Elliott!"

"Do you wish me to try?" asked Mr. Chichester, looking at Miss Elliott for the first time.

Dym's angry blush was a sufficient answer.

"On no account. Mr. Chichester, please take no notice of what she says. I wish they had not brought you up. Edith, you must be reasonable; little girls cannot understand these things. I would not stop now if your sister were to ask me to remain."

"Don't mind her," pleaded the child; "she is hurt of course. Do what I ask you, Cousin Guy."

"Edith, I desire you will not; I shall be very angry. Mr. Chichester, you will not——" Dym broke down between stammering and hot flushes.

Mr. Chichester shrugged his shoulders with a good-humoured look of perplexity.

"You don't want to make my head bad again between you, do you? I feel warning symptoms. Edith, you naughty child, lie down and go to sleep. Don't you know children have no business to meddle with things they do not

understand." Then, as Edith's lip quivered and she looked ready to cry, "There, go to sleep, pussie, and I promise you that Miss Elliott shall not go if I can prevent it." And with that Edith allowed herself to be pacified.

Miss Elliott signed to Caroline to take her place by the bedside, and quietly followed Cousin Guy from the room.

"Mr. Chichester."

"Well?" halting in the lamp-lighted passage, and regarding her disturbed face with some amusement. "You don't want me to break my word to Edith?"

"You ought not to have promised such a thing. I do beg, I entreat, that you will not speak to Miss Tressilian on my behalf."

"I am thinking of Edith," with a contradictory twinkle of the eyes.

The young governess coloured, but maintained her ground nevertheless.

"Edith will soon get used to Mrs. Vivian. I think it is better for her, too, that I should go. I am very young and inexperienced—every one says so. I do my best." Here something rose in the girl's throat, and she hurried on: "I do beg, Mr. Chichester, that you will not interfere in this matter." An attempt at dignity verging on the pathetic.

"May I ask one question? Is it my aunt's wish that you should go?"

"I think not; I believe Miss Tressilian has persuaded her that I am unfit to manage Edith."

"Have you another situation in view?"

"No," very sadly.

"And you will have some difficulty in finding one?"

"I am afraid so."

"Forgive me if I seem impertinent, but is this thing of consequence to you?"

Something sympathetic in the tone broke down Dym's reserve, and the tears came into her dark eyes.

"Of every consequence. I have only Will—that is my brother. We two are alone in the whole world, and he is only a poor curate, and cannot afford to keep me."

"Hush, don't cry! There are worse troubles than poverty. There, go back to your patient."

"And you will not speak?"

"*Cela dépend.* Supposing you shake hands and say good-night."

Dym put out a hand very timidly.

"Good-night, Mr. Chichester."

"Good-night, Miss Elliott. By-the-bye, I have never thanked you for your skilful nursing this morning."

"There is no need for thanks. I was very glad to do my best for you. Are you quite sure you are better?"

"Humph, tolerably so! That brother of yours must be a lucky fellow to get such nursing, Miss Elliott. There, good-night. Don't spin any more cobwebs;" and Mr. Chichester turned on his heel with a good-humoured nod and went downstairs.

Miss Elliott had not much more trouble with

her little patient that night; she very soon dropped off into a feverish sleep, which lasted with short intermission till the morning.

After all, Beatrix's prognostications were correct—it was only one of the child's ordinary attacks, accelerated by excitement and fatigue. For a few days she was ill enough to keep Miss Elliott a close prisoner to her sick-room; for with the obstinacy of a spoiled child she would hardly permit her sister to come near her, and even her mother and Caroline were barely tolerated. Cousin Guy paid regular visits, and was always welcomed by a languid smile. When she was well enough, he would stop and play with her for an hour or two. He took very little notice of Edith's nurse beyond a cheerful word or two. Dym would sit apart sewing in the window, quite content to be a listener. She could not help a smile now and then at his droll sallies, but at other times she looked drooping, almost sad. The hour for her departure was drawing near, and she began to suspect that Mr. Chichester's promised mediation had failed.

Her suspicion was soon verified.

One afternoon, when Edith was well enough to be carried down to the drawing-room, Dym was standing listlessly by the schoolroom-window, fondling Kiddle-a-wink, who often found his way upstairs, when a sudden eager prick of the ears and a pleased bark made her turn round.

"Is there any admittance for Kiddle-a-wink's master?"

"I don't know—I suppose so," stammered

Dym nervously. She was a little afraid of Mr. Chichester's quizzical eyes.

"Edith is downstairs in the drawing-room, sir."

"As I carried her there myself, I suppose I am aware of that fact. I also strongly suspect that my Cousin Beatrix has just ridden from the door with Colonel Delaire, and that my aunt is asleep."

"Does Edith want me, Mr. Chichester?"

"On the contrary. I believe it is I who want you. I have come to tell you, Miss Elliott, that, as usual, I have been a most egregious blunderer—that, in fact, I have failed *in toto*."

"So I supposed," was the almost inaudible answer.

"Verdict, 'Served me right.' I suppose I ought to have taken your advice, and not meddled in matters too high for me. I wonder how they would ever preserve the balance of power in a woman's parliament; there would be nothing but opposition benches—no ayes, all noes. Where do you women manage to invest your vast stock of pride?"

"Miss Tressilian is very proud, Mr. Chichester."

"So is somebody else—six of one and half a dozen of another. I wash my hands of you both. Ulysses ploughing the sea-shore with his ill-matched team has an easy task compared to a man who has to reconcile two angry women."

"Edith represents the infant Telemachus, I

suppose," returned Dym, trying to enter into his humour.

"Exactly so. Well, as I have got into hot water for your sake, I hope you will be grateful, anyhow. I have got my *congé* from Lansdowne House."

"Do you mean you and Miss Tressilian have quarrelled? O Mr. Chichester!"

"Don't alarm yourself; a difference of opinion is not uncommon between us. My Cousin Beatrix is not a manageable woman. I am not fond of manageable women. When I am provoked to say anything specially bitter, I generally pack my bag."

"Indeed!" Dym could find no satisfactory answer to this strange confidence.

"I believe James is packing mine now. I am an erratic animal, Miss Elliott, a large edition of the Miss Mowcher type—'here, there, and everywhere.' By-the-bye, if I hear of anything to your advantage, shall I advertise?"

"I don't understand you," began Dym, in a puzzled tone.

"I will explain myself, then. If I hear of a very young governess being wanted immediately, on fabulous terms, how am I—they—how is any one to communicate with you?"

"Oh, I see. You mean, I am to give you my address, or rather my brother's."

"Exactly so; brothers are very safe persons."

Dym did not quite know what to make of the mocking tones; older and wiser people were seldom quite sure when Guy Chichester was

speaking in jest or earnest. She gravely waited while he produced his pocket-book, and obediently wrote down her address—

"The Rev. William Elliott,

3, *Paradise Row* (*leading out of Malden Road*), *Kentish Town.*"

She half fancied that she saw a start of surprise as Mr. Chichester read her entry. He gave her a quick searching look and seemed about to speak, and then checked himself. When he next spoke he had resumed his ordinary manner.

"Where does your brother work?"

"At St. Luke's. Such an ugly old church, and such a poor parish. The vicar, Mr. Benedict, is away on sick leave. Will is sole curate in charge."

"Did he advertise in the *Guardian* for help long time ago?"

"Yes, when he felt himself breaking down; but no one would accept the miserable stipend he offered them, and so he has to go on alone. There has been a great deal of sickness about lately, and he has been miserably overworked, the night-schools come so heavily on him."

"I daresay. Thank you, Miss Elliott, for being so frank with me; I am really anxious to serve you if I can—if only," he hesitated, "for Edith's sake, and because of my cousin's injustice to you. You know I am Edith's guardian."

"I did not know it, sir."

"Probably not. Well, I don't care to exert

my authority unnecessarily. Perhaps, after all, though you can't help it, you are rather young. Come, Kiddle-a-wink, my fine fellow, we must be going. Adieu! *au revoir*, Miss Elliott."

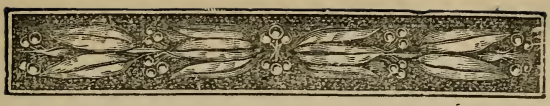
"It is good-bye altogether, sir; I am leaving the day after to-morrow."

"So much the better; delays are weak. Never mind; it is *au revoir*, for all that." And with a kindly shake of the hand Guy Chichester left the room.

The next day the Reverend William Elliott received the following curt missive:

"Tired of my West-end life already, and in a frightfully bad temper. Hard work the only cure. Shall take the night-schools to-morrow, and keep on for the next three weeks. Tell Bill Saunders to be careful, and have none of his nonsense for the future. Hope your cough is better.—Yours to command,

"An Honest Friend and Well-wisher to St. Luke's."



CHAPTER IV.

NUMBER THREE PARADISE ROW.

I SUPPOSE most people have agreed that Camden Town is hardly to be considered as a fashionable locality. It is possible to find it on the map. But an inhabitant of Belgravia will hardly so compromise himself or herself as to be quite sure of its exact locality. Hampstead may be mentioned with a certain amount of caution, and there is something delightfully Bohemian in the thought of St. John's Wood. Artists and singers group themselves there in colonies, which trench somewhat fastidiously on the border-land which vaguely hints at Kilburn. Regent's Park has a strong flavour of gentility, which, much diluted, spreads itself out with some difficulty to the green confines of Primrose Hill; but Camden Town! breathe it not into ears polite!

It is out of the radius, unredeemable, a spot of earth abandoned to the spoiler; one of a triumvirate, for its twin sisters, Kentish and Somers Towns, must veil their heads under the same genteel obloquy. People who have heard of Whitechapel, of the Seven Dials, of Poplar, of

the Isle of Dogs, from the *Records of the City Missionary,* will somehow comprehend these places in the same dim category as regions where such people ought to work—as outskirts where the overflowing lava of population in the great city may spread itself out, and cover the ground, drinking-in fresh country air, and gaining glimpses of green fields and trees, till the endless rows of thinly-walled houses shut out the transient view; till the comfortless lodging-houses fill to suffocation; till the squalor of poverty and a nation's ever-increasing need devour everything like Pharaoh's hungry kine; till room and more room are fiercely demanded, and the crowds of children playing in the gutters seem, with their innocent, famine-worn faces, to protest unconsciously against their own existence.

"Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones—" What, these little ones!—these hungry and ignorant blasphemers, from whose words we recoil in horror, from whom we draw aside our very garments to defend them against their contaminating touch; these children who drink in vice with their mother's milk, who know nothing but to starve and lie and curse; these little ones! "Whosoever shall offend one of these—"

These things are the hieroglyphics of life—the mystery which nineteenth-century philanthropists are striving to solve with compulsory education, with pitiable gifts of larger light, which shall only serve to show them the deeper darkness of

their surroundings. True, the light advances. Many are the earnest workers, the earnest thinkers, who have set themselves but this one life task—to fight till death against the serried ranks of evil; who will carry if it be but a flickering torchlight into these dark places of the earth, if haply they can rescue one soul, one starving diseased body, nay, even one of these little ones, who suffer the martyrdom of the Innocents a hundred times, whose dumb cries are unheard on earth, but which fill heaven.

These are the true heroes, the heroines, the faithful servants in the Parable, the workers in the vineyards. Still is the work never-ceasing, while the labourers are few.

Few people envied the Reverend William Elliott, the hard-working curate at St. Luke's. Some of the most earnest minded of his flock helped and encouraged him, it is true; but the rest—those even of his poorer parishioners—pitied and somewhat looked down on him.

He was a poor man as they were, dwelling amongst them in a home scarcely better than theirs—a man, too, that could not bear his poverty with any special grace or dignity—such were his infirmities—but who lived out his blameless and suffering life with the cheerfulness and constancy of a martyr.

Few more noble characters than William Elliott, few more solely tried lives.

By birth a gentleman, and with a gentleman's refined mind and fastidious taste, with great powers of intellect, and of a naturally sociable

temperament, Providence—or, as people somewhat irreverently term it, Fate—had removed him from the studious seclusion of college life, and the delights of cultivated and congenial fellowship, to a curate's hard-working life and bare pittance at St. Luke's, Kentish Town.

Not that he regretted this transition: in spite of its poverty and drawbacks, William Elliott had the purest enthusiasm for his work. From the first he had grasped the deep responsibilities of his vocation. There was never any doubt, any looking back, in his mind. To be the poor man's priest, and to live among poor men, constituted his sole ambition. Nevertheless, there had come to the patient soldier of the Cross a long interval of anxious waiting, of hope and fear deferred, as to whether he should ever be permitted to buckle on his harness again and go down to the battle.

In the prime of his youth, in the first freshness of his work, when he had only just taken priest's orders, he had been struck down by a violent fever, caught during his ministrations beside a dying bed. It was badly treated and carelessly nursed. His landlady shared the universal panic, and left the young clergyman to the tender mercies of a hireling, who neglected and robbed him. His recovery was tedious, and was further delayed by the harassed state of his mind and the want of even necessary comforts.

He had nothing to relieve the tedium of those dreary days spent in that close back room; no one to sit by him and bring him the fruit and

flowers he babbled about in his delirium; no womanly sympathy to lessen the irritability of convalescence or restrain imprudence; and so it was that one damp cloudy-looking day he crept out from his sick room, and, tempted by a transient sun-gleam, stole slowly away down the empty streets.

He did this again and again; and one day, impatient of his weakness, taxed his feeble powers to reach a given spot, where he could see the green fields of Highgate and feel the soft free winds of heaven blow freshly over him. It was a somewhat sultry evening. A bricklayer, smoking his pipe by a stile, drew back to let the sick-looking gentleman pass, and, in answer to his languid good evening, muttered out hoarsely, "That there was going to be a rare thunderstorm and a mort of rain, and wise folks would house themselves as quick as possible."

"What do you mean, my man?" asked the young clergyman, looking up at the lurid clouds with some alarm. "I have been walking further than I intended, and have not been thinking. Will the storm break over us soon, do you say?"

The man held up his hand in answer—both heard the low rumblings of distant thunder.

"Better go back, sir; there is no shelter further on," he answered civilly enough.

"Thank you, I think I will," answered William Elliott faintly. He had been very happy a moment before, thinking out little bits of a sermon he hoped to preach the following Sunday.

Now all at once he felt an oppression and failure of strength—the heavy atmosphere suffocated him—he dragged his feet more wearily every step, and had to pause now and then, and lean against a fence for support. The man was right; in a few minutes the storm had broken over them.

And what a storm!

It beat down on the poor invalid with overwhelming fury. William Elliott just remembered creeping under an old wall for shelter, with a confusing consciousness of blinding flashes and the crashing of thunder, followed by torrents of rain; then darkness, a smell of cool fresh earth, a strange numbness and giddiness, followed by a blank.

He never knew how long he lay in that strange fainting fit of his under the old wall. The storm was over, the birds were singing in the evening sunshine, the fields were full of wet fragrance, when some artisans returning from their work found him, a dead man as they thought, and carried him home.

And in the home of those humble Samaritans William Elliott fought out that desperate life combat.

"Better he should die," they said, who watched that terrible conflict.

"Yes, if it be His will," answered William Elliott.

But he never prayed to die. In all his torture his manhood was strong within him. In his hours of direst anguish, when his whole body

was convulsed, and they marvelled how he could and did endure, no rebellious murmurs escaped his lips; and even when the pain forced tears from his eyes, his only complaint was, "Oh, if I could only bear it better! Do you think it will soon be over?"

When the clergyman of the place, an old man, visited him, and exhorted him to patience, telling him for his comfort that death could not long be delayed, William Elliott shook his head with a sorrowful smile.

"I never thought any one could halt so long in the Valley of the Shadow of Death. It is weary work to be waiting outside as it were; but," with a little shudder, "they wont open the door for me just yet." And then he slowly, and with weak voice, repeated the words, "I shall not die, but live." And he was right.

It was a complication of rheumatic fever and sciatica, and for many months he remained helpless in the hands of his nurses. When he grew a little better, they asked if he had no relative who could come to him.

"Only a young sister," he replied, with a sigh; but when they implored him to send for her, he refused. Dym must not come to him; she was at a school in Paris, preparing herself for her future work; it would never do to interrupt or break off her studies, they could not afford it. And then he went on to explain, in his gentle way, that they were very poor; that this long illness was draining the little stock of money that he had laid aside for such contingencies;

that it was well to face such things; that it would be many, many months, perhaps years, before he would be fit for work, and even then he might be crippled. Might it not even be that Dym would have to support them both?

And so the letters that reached Dym in her foreign school were cheerful ones, though written in a strange hand, and spoke lightly of his illness. He had rheumatism very badly, and could not use his pen; he had caught cold, and his back and limbs were affected. It might be a long time before he could resume his work; but he had some money laid by, and he must draw on that, though he had been saving it so carefully for their future home. But Dym must not be anxious, he had kind nurses and plenty of comforts; and she must work hard now, and come home by-and-bye.

Dym could not quite banish the anxiety, but she had plenty of faith. She did not believe that Will would deceive her about himself; presently, when he could resume his cramped handwriting, she grew more cheerful. She wondered sometimes why he still delayed applying for another curacy, and fancied he was not strong enough for work; but she had no conception of the truth.

Her brother had spared her two years of pain; but he could not relieve her from the shock of first seeing him.

Dym uttered a cry of anguish when she saw him at the station. He was her own brother, from whom she had parted three years ago, but she would have passed him in the street.

True he had told her jokingly in one of his letters that he was very crooked, and had taken to spectacles, as his eyes troubled him a good deal; and Dym had fretted over this for three days; but even this had not prepared her for the change. She had seen him last a fresh-coloured youth, erect, and rather tall than otherwise; now he was bowed in so singular a manner that people spoke of him as "the deformed clergyman;" and when he moved he dragged one leg as he walked. The bright complexion had faded into sickly sallowness, as of one in habitual suffering; and the beautiful eyes looked changed in expression, seen through those hideous glasses; while young as he was, barely eight-and-twenty, his fair hair was already touched with grey.

"O Will, Will!" And the poor little sister clung to him in such a passion of tears that, albeit unused to such luxuries, William Elliott was obliged to hurry her into the safe obscurity of a cab, and in the darkness to take off his own damp glasses, and wipe them again and again.

Dym never forgave him that long deceit, neither would she ever leave him without first extorting from him a faithful promise that she should come and nurse him if he were ill again.

"But I am never going to be ill again," with a shudder half real and half pretended.

"No; but you must tell me when anything ails you, and then I can judge for myself; remember, Will, you have promised—when you are in any pain."

"My dear child, when am I without pain?"

"Oh, of course your rheumatism is troublesome; the doctor says you must expect that. All I want to know is, if you have anything out of the common, if you have caught cold or your eyes are bad, and how you will manage when you begin work again. Do you think Mr. Benedict will be kind to you?"

"Undoubtedly. I told him all about it, Dym, and how no one would employ me because of my infirmities, and that you and I were making up our minds in earnest to starve; and he seemed quite touched. Of course he cannot tell yet how far I am fit for work, but I am to know in three months' time—and I'll merit my name yet, Dym, and be Conqueror to the last." A pet name she had called him from a child.

So it was that William Elliott won his place at St. Luke's, and kept it too, in spite of weak health, uncertain powers, and the discontented murmurs of, happily, a minority of the congregation, who could not brook the curate's peculiarities and, above all, his poverty.

For he was very poor, and was not ashamed to own himself as such. What it cost him to keep himself, to a certain extent as a gentleman, and yet not to be in debt, was known only to the brother and sister; and, as Dym herself honestly avowed, she was only a burden to him.

Dym was the dearest little creature in the world to those who loved her, but she was certainly one of Mr Chichester's "unmanageable women"—she had a temper, and she had not

learned to govern it; she was as jealous and proud as a small Lucifer, and people found it out, and would not put up with it.

Dym could not keep her places; she had only been a governess for eight months, and had already tried three situations and had lost them.

At Miss Northcote's, where she had been pupil-governess, she had sided with the elder girls, and rebelled against lawful authority—the pupil-teacher was in all the mischief that was going on. In three weeks Miss Northcote wrote in despair to her brother to take her away.

Dym had never seen such a look on Will's face as when he came to fetch her.

Dym cried till her eyes were sore. She would much rather he had scolded her, but he never said a word—only when he found her another situation in the same capacity in a smaller school, he gravely reminded her that after their father's death he had spent half the little stock of money he had left them in giving her a good education; that he could not at present afford to maintain her; and that unless she could govern her childish temper it would be the worse for them both.

Dym cried again, and promised, and really did very well in the beginning; but the work was too hard for a girl of seventeen. Mrs. Saunders was a rigid disciplinarian, and had small sympathy with girlish failings. Dym's spirits flagged, her health suffered, she got into careless ways, and then grew miserable at her failures. Mrs. Saunders had small patience with either faults or penitence; she told Miss Elliott in pretty plain

terms, that such fine ladies would not suit her; her French accent was perfect, but her temper was execrable—in short, she was not cut out for a governess.

"I must teach, or I must starve," cried the girl in a little fury of despair, turning fiercely upon her tormentor. Somehow, the blunt manner did not offend Mrs. Saunders; on the contrary, her pity was somewhat moved by it; she took the girl, not unkindly, by the hand after that, and gave her a long harangue on the duties of gentleness and patience in women—to which Dym listened rebelliously—and then she pushed a letter towards her. It was from a lady—a connexion of one of her girls—who was in sad trouble about her governesses. She wanted a very young lady; youth no obstacle—a cheerful, well-mannered young person, and tolerably well educated—who could undertake the charge of her little girl Edith, a very delicate child, who required careful supervision and a few daily lessons; anything like real study being forbidden by the doctors.

"And I should say this place would just suit you, Miss Elliott. You are too young, and, if you will permit me to say so, too frivolous, for the drudgery of school. I know Mrs. Tressilian slightly; she will take any young person I recommend; she is very solicitous about this child, as she has already lost two daughters at the same age—so you understand the responsibility will hardly be so light as the work."

Dym nodded and smiled. One child, too

much study interdicted; the place seemed just made for her. She listened in a sort of rapturous dream to the many prosy directions of the good schoolmistress. Here, at least, she could have a little time to herself, and enjoy something like pleasure.

So it was that Dym Elliott came to Lansdowne House; but as in all Paradises, even here the serpent was not wanting. Dym had plenty of time to herself—she had leisure and loneliness to indulge in fancies to her heart's content—but it might be doubted whether Mrs. Saunders's crowded dormitories were not a more wholesome discipline. Dym began to exaggerate, and then to brood over her exaggerations. She kept her outworks undefended, and so exposed her citadel to sudden attacks. Miss Tressilian's manner was not a pleasing one to dependents—she disliked Dym's bluntness from the first. Dym's pride was always catching fire. Sometimes she bore in silence—oftener she retaliated. Never a meek woman, the "soft answer that turns away wrath" somehow never came at the right moment. Mrs. Tressilian liked her, but her manner to Beatrix was offensive. Both were to blame, Guy Chichester thought, and Mr. Chichester was generally right; his only mistake was in taking part with the losing side.

He generally blundered in his generosity.

Those sort of people make great mistakes in their lives. Guy Chichester's mistakes were not few. But he was, nevertheless, a good fellow for all that.

Revenons à nos moutons, as our neighbours say.

The Reverend William Elliott lived in No. 3, Paradise Row, the row being on the shady side of a street leading out of the Malden Road, within easy distance of Mother Shipton.

There is nothing to find fault with in the air; nevertheless, the locality itself is not a savoury one. The streets are tolerably wide, but the houses are too densely populated; there is too much poverty and too many cheap fish-shops to be quite wholesome; still there are worse places than Malden Road, and certainly far worse than Paradise Row.

The row itself was a quiet respectable row, much affected by dressmakers and seamstresses. A tailor lived at one end, and, if the truth must be told, a mangle had lately been advertised at the other end. Mr. Elliott always said he did not mind the tailor—wasn't one of Kingsley's heroes, Alton Locke, a tailor?—but, as he observed pathetically, the mangle was too much for him—it meant a coming down of gentility, and nothing but a reduction of rent and taxes could repair that damage. Somebody said a sweep had taken the upper floor; if so, No. 26 had certainly been delivered into the hands of the Philistines. There must be limits to everything, and a sweep was beyond those limits.

For William Elliott had a certain sweet wholesome humour of his own. And its beauty was, that it hurt no one.

No. 3 was tenanted by those same good

Samaritans who had tended the young clergyman through his long trouble; as far as it lay in his power he had repaid their kindness. Love begets love—a strong friendship grew between these worthy people and their patient. When he moved to St. Luke's, having heard of employment in that place, Dick Maynard and his wife moved too. The little furniture that Mr. Elliott had accumulated in his college life was quite sufficient for the two small rooms which were all he could afford out of his slender income. In Dym's brief visits, a small, barely-furnished apartment at the top of the house was allotted her by the worthy couple, who had lost all their children but one—little lame Dick, as he was called. Dick slept in the little room next to Dym's, and whistled her awake in the morning. He kept a family of young linnets and a couple of white mice in his room, and had a habit of playing on the accordion at three o'clock in the morning. With the exception of these amiable peculiarities, and the incessant sound of his crutches on the uncarpeted stairs and floor, Dick was a very harmless neighbour, and kept the dark mornings tuneful like a sprightly little cock.

Dick had a vast admiration for Miss Elliott, whom he called "his pretty lady;" but the whole of his child's worship was given to her brother. Ever since the time when he had sat curled up at the foot of the sick bed for hours together, amusing the poor invalid with his incessant childish prattle, an intense love and

reverence for Mr. Elliott had crept into his simple heart. Deprived by his affliction of all the usual boyish sports—for he had been lame from his birth—the little fellow's greatest happiness was to be allowed to sit in Mr. Elliott's room, where he would amuse himself for a whole day together, without interrupting the composition of a sermon, and he would remain so quiet that sometimes Mr. Elliott would forget the child's presence altogether.

Dick said his simple lessons to Mr. Elliott daily. The few fragments of leisure that remained to the overworked curate were always devoted to the little cripple. Thus did William Elliott strive to repay to the parents the many homely kindnesses that were lavished on him during his long illness.

Dick was sitting on the steps one sunny afternoon, mending his linnets' cage, and singing to himself in a low crooning voice, when a shadow, thrown on the pavement, made him look up, and there was his pretty lady smiling at him.

"Good evening, Dick."

The boy's eyes sparkled. "O Miss Elliott, what a start you did give me! Mother does not expect you, does she?"

"Neither mother nor any one. Hush, Dick, don't make a noise. I want to surprise my brother; is he in there?"

Dick nodded. "Just come in from the schools. My, wont he be pleased!" And, in a rapture of ecstasy, Dick took out his accordion

and played softly, "O Willie, we have missed you," and finished with "God save the Queen."

Meanwhile, Dym had gone in from the sunshine to the dark narrow passage inside; she stood outside the half-closed door listening for a moment, as though she lacked courage to enter, but she pushed it open more boldly on hearing a slight well-known cough.

The room was small certainly, but had a cosy, well-used air about it; it was not badly furnished either. A leather-covered library table; two or three handsomely-carved chairs, relics of college luxury; a well-filled bookcase; a reading-stand and lamp; and a snug-looking couch—all spoke of William Elliott's better days. A stand of flowers, carefully tended, guarded the privacy of the window, and a rough yellow dog lay on the hearthrug. Mr. Elliott himself sat busily writing at the table, with his back towards the door.

Nip growled a little, and then turned over on his back and grovelled when he saw his mistake—he was an abject dog, and he knew it. Dym looked pitifully for a moment at the bowed figure before her, and then stole forward and laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Will."

"Hulloa!"

Nip ceased grovelling, and began barking in earnest at the exclamation and the start that sent all the papers flying. If Mr. Elliott had

meant to rise, he could not well have done so, with Dym's two arms round his neck nearly strangling him.

"My dear Dym!"

"My dear, dear old Will Conqueror!"

"Let me get a look at you, girl; you are almost depriving me of breath—there, that is better," taking off his spectacles the better to regard her. "Now what's the meaning of all this? Has Mrs. Tressilian given you another holiday?"

Dym shook her head.

"What, have you taken French leave, then?"

"Don't ask so many questions; aren't you glad to see me? O Will, it is so delicious to be looking at your dear old face again!"

Mr. Elliott laughed; but he was not quite satisfied. In spite of her pleasure, Dym looked pale and a little worn, and she did not freely meet her brother's eyes; on the contrary, his close inspection seemed to embarrass her, and she turned away, and laid aside her hat and jacket with an evident desire to gain time. Instinctively Mr. Elliott felt then that things were not right with his young sister.

"Well, you provoking child, when are you going to answer me? There, leave your hair alone; you look as tidy and trim as possible."

"Do I?" answered Dym absently. "I suppose I must tell you all about it, Will; it is better to get it all over. There, take your old chair, and I will bring up my own footstool. Out of the way, Nip, good dog!" And suiting

her action to her words, Dym dropped down on her lowly seat, and crossing her hands on her brother's knee, laid her cheek upon them.

It was not a good beginning, and Mr. Elliott felt sure there wes something amiss.

"Come, little one, confess. You are in trouble again."

"O Will, in horrible trouble. I don't know what makes it so hard to tell you to-day; but I can't get it out. You will be so sorry, and I can't help it, but they wont let me stay."

"Dym!"

"There, I knew how shocked you would be."

An awful silence.

"I did try, Will, I did indeed; but they said I was young and silly; and Miss Tressilian was disagreeable, and they would not keep me."

Still the same silence.

"O Will, if you take it in this way I don't know what I shall do!" and for once in her life Dym evidently dreaded her brother's reproof. It came at last with a sternness that was almost crushing.

"Child, child, after all my care, all my prayers for you, do you mean to break my heart?"

Dym looked up at him frightened; never had he spoken to her with such solemnity, in such a tone of repressed grief.

"Dym, could you not have saved me from this?"

Dym tried to pluck up spirit to answer, but the effort failed. The reproach had touched her

better nature. She dropped her head again on his knee, and murmured almost inaudibly—

"You have never been so hard on me before."

"Because you have never so sorely tried me. Come, Dym, you are not a child now; how often are you to come back to me with the same story of miserable failures? Must I remind you again and again that 'he that doth not work, neither must he eat'?"

"Will, I cannot bear it—you are unjust to me."

"Is it unjust to remind you that we are poorer than ever, and that you at least must not starve?"

"Better starve than be trampled on."

"Always the same thing—pride, temper, jealousy. My dear, when are you going to be a woman, and learn to govern yourself?"

Dym made no answer; the large tears were dropping into her lap one by one. Will was unjust to her; he would not believe that she really had tried this time. She had come to him in her trouble for a little comfort, and all this was very bitter to her. Mr. Elliott sighed very deeply once or twice, and then he put his hand on her head, and softly stroked her hair.

"Come, my dear, tell me all about it," he said coaxingly; and Dym dried her eyes and cheered up a little, and told her story by-and-bye in a humble way that thoroughly touched her listener's heart. Dym, woman-like, felt she had made a point—and instantly lost it.

"There, Will, do you think I was so much to blame?" she finished a little triumphantly.

The answer disappointed her.

"Very much indeed," was the uncompromising rejoinder.

"How so?" she asked, in a crestfallen tone. "Surely you will allow Miss Tressilian was more in fault than I?"

"My dear little sister, as usual you are taking the worst side of the argument. Granted Miss Tressilian was the aggressor, does it never occur to you that people, governesses especially, may sometimes be called upon to endure?"

"But, Will——"

"My dear Dym, I am very sorry for all this—very sorry, because I must tell you, once for all, I am disappointed in you; you seem to have so little stability."

"Now you are going to be unkind again."

"I am going to tell you the truth, certainly. Dym, you have no idea how all this hurts me—with the best intentions in the world your efforts are so frightfully weak. Child, how ever will you make your way in the world if you do not learn to restrain this jealous temper of yours?"

"O Will, do be more merciful! Every one cannot be as good as you; and you never will believe that I try."

"Yes, I do," he replied, thoughtfully; "no one knows better than I what a noble-hearted girl you are at the bottom. But, Dym darling, I do so long to see the higher nature

assert itself; these three wretched failures of yours make me tremble so for the future. What would you do if you had not got me to fall back upon as a last resource?—though I fear I am but a poor protector to you, poor child."

This was too much for Dym's affectionate heart;—and she clung round her brother's neck with a vehement "No, No!"

"Ah, but I am," he repeated in a tone of quiet conviction, blended with sadness. "If I had ever so poor a home to offer you, I should be more than content; but with my health how is that to be achieved?"

"You dear old Conqueror, I will not let you talk so. There, that serves me right for making you so unhappy; if it will make you more comfortable to hear it, I'll own I have been bad in every way—cross, touchy, disagreeable, and altogether horrid."

"Nay," he returned, with a smile, "that is making yourself out too bad. After all, Dym, I am afraid you are not cut out for a governess."

"I am sure of it," was the eager reply. "Oh, if I could only take in plain sewing, and live here with you, I am sure I should be always good! Then, very coaxingly, "Couldn't it be managed, Will dear? I might give music-lessons, or teach French, or even a place as daily governess might suit me better. Do say you wont send me away again, Will; you don't know half how unhappy I am away from you."

"My dear, a governess in Kentish Town!"

"Why not? It is not worse than being a curate here. Who is proud now, I should like to know?"

"But with all your advantages——"

"I am not half so clever as you, Will."

"The idea of comparing us two—an old crippled hulk as I am. Dym, are you sure I was only eight-and-twenty last birthday? I feel forty, at least; look how thin my hair is—and turning grey too."

"That comes of those horrible headaches; but when you take those ugly glasses off your eyes you are as nice as ever. I do like your eyes, Will."

"Little flatterer."

"Ah, but you like it all the same; you get so dull living in these little rooms, and having no one to say pretty things to you. You feel better already for having me to scold."

"I have not scolded you half properly, I am afraid."

"It will keep. Suppose you ring the bell instead, and ask Mrs. Maynard to bring us some tea. I am so hungry and thirsty and tired, Will, and you have not made me a bit comfortable. There, I know what you are going to say—it is Mrs. Maynard's washing-day."

"What a memory you have, Dym! Of course it is, but I daresay——" and here the curate looked helplessly round.

"Never mind, Will; sit where you are. I'll have everything ready in a moment;" and before

Mr. Elliott could look down she had disappeared, and so quick were her movements that before another quarter of an hour had elapsed the brother and sister were established cosily at their frugal meal.

CHAPTER V.

THE GREAT UNKNOWN.

"DYM, do you know the Great Unknown has turned up again?"

"Nonsense, Will!"

Dym sat opposite her brother, with the tea equipage between them.

The cloth that covered the small library-table was carefully darned and spotless in colour; the very teapot, though only of Britannia metal, was evidently burnished by willing hands, and reflected Dym's beaming face in a widening caricature.

It was wonderful how beaming Dym's face could look just now. Miss Tressilian would hardly have recognised the little pale-faced governess. Dym's olive complexion had warmed into sudden colour; her eyes were full of soft brilliance; in her whole appearance there was animation, life, *verve;* under such aspects Dym could look very pretty.

The Parisian education had not been altogether thrown away. Dym could put on a shabby dress, and wear it with the grace of a Frenchwoman; in spite of her slender purse, she never

looked ill dressed on any occasion. She had all sorts of simple knacks and contrivances; she would redeem plainness with a knot of gay-coloured ribbon; she knew how to adjust a bow or a flower coquettishly. This sort of tact is very valuable to a woman; and though Dym had not a speck of vanity in her composition, she was often heard to say "that it was a woman's duty, a plain woman's especially, to make the best of herself."

Mr. Elliott's admiration for his young sister was unbounded—he had regarded her trim figure complacently more than once before he had burst out with an involuntary, "You look very pretty, Dym."

"I am so glad you think so, Will dear," she had answered quite simply; and then William Elliott had followed up the remark with another rather startling one, "Do you know the Great Unknown has turned up again?"

"Nonsense, Will!"

"It is true, I assure you."

"Do you mean Mr. Latimer has really been here again?"

"Latimer! nonsense; that's not his name."

"It is what he chooses to call himself, I suppose. Will, don't you think it is wrong for people not to call themselves by their proper names?"

"That depends. I believe the motive ought to accuse or excuse in such a case. Of course I think it is a pity; nay, more, a mistake."

"I call it deceit."

"Humph, that sounds harsh—women are always so intolerant. This happens to be pure caprice—a whim; the man is full of whims."

"He does seem to be a most extraordinary person. Did he ever give you his reasons, Will?"

"Well, they were hardly to be called reasons. He told me once that he had taken this singular alias to escape the notice of a host of gay London friends. "I don't want to be unearthed just now," he remarked, "and to have a great hue and cry after me; cannot you respect my incognito a little longer, Mr. Elliott?" And when I hazarded the observation that I thought his fashionable friends would hardly explore Kentish Town in search of him, he answered dryly enough, 'Possibly not; but when one has such a staff of moral police—in the shape of one's friends—a man hardly knows when he is safe.' Oh, he is all right, you may depend upon it. Of course I could not press him any further."

Dym shook her head sagely, and pursed up her lips.

"You are infatuated, Will. The Great Unknown has bewitched your better judgment."

"I confess he interests me strongly. A man who can act as he does, and for a whim evidently—oh, there's some stuff in him! After all, one must judge of a man by his actions, and not by his words."

"True."

"This man's actions are most noble. You

may shake your head, Dym, but there's something great about Mr. Latimer."

"Who was it who preached to me against the folly of hero-worship? Ah, I have you there, Will."

"Not at all. I suppose a man's honest appreciation is of more value than a school-girl's hysterical admiration. School-girls are so superficial and unsafe in their missish likings and dislikings."

"Will, oughtn't you to be ashamed of yourself? Hysterical, missish—for shame!"

"So they are. Never mind, Dym; I'll forgive you a great deal if you will properly admire Mr. Latimer."

"I am afraid I do a little already," returned Dym honestly. "Do people fall in love on hearsay, I wonder? How long is it since we first heard of this mysterious individual, Will?"

"Let me see. It must be eighteen months ago—it was just after I had got to St. Luke's. I was beginning my three months' probation, I remember."

"So do I. Eighteen months—what a long time to be faithful to St. Luke's!"

William Elliott's eyes had a far-away look of pleased remembrance. "How well I remember our first meeting—the time and place and all! It was original, to say the least of it; everything the man said or did was unlike what any one else would have said or done under the circumstances. It was a wet night, and I was preaching at St. Luke's to a very scanty congregation. I

even remember the subject of my sermon; for I had lost heart about things, and I seemed to be preaching to myself more than to any one else. It was about 'not being weary in well-doing,' and when I went into the vestry there he was waiting for me."

"To be sure—how odd it all was!" cried Dym. She had heard it before, but her brother's pleasure in the reminiscence charmed her; she would not have interrupted his recital for worlds.

William Elliott rubbed his hands slowly over each other, and went on.

"Yes, there he was lolling against the vestry mantelpiece, and looking like a good-tempered giant; and when he saw me, he came forward and shook hands. I can almost feel his grip now. 'That's a capital sermon of yours, Mr. Elliott,' he said, 'and I want to have a good talk with you about it;' and his manner was just as cordial and pleasant as though we had met yesterday."

"Dear, dear," laughed Dym, "what a very droll person he must be, Will!"

"Droll! I should think so. I never saw such a pure piece of originality in my life before. 'Well,' he went on in the same cheery voice, 'what I like so much about it was, that you spoke as a man should who tried to practise what he preached.' Odd, wasn't it?"

"I think he must be a very Broad Churchman," observed Dym solemnly.

Her brother laughed outright.

"Well done, Dym; that's what I call begging an argument. Never mind his particular party; I shouldn't wonder at all if his school were different from ours; but to return to that Friday evening. You know Morris had just sent to me to baptize a dying child, so of course I could not stand talking to him there; but when I explained the urgent cause for my haste, 'I'll go with you,' he returned briskly; 'one can talk outside as well as inside, and I daresay you will be glad of a strong arm this boisterous night, as you don't appear over strong.'

"As you may suppose, I was a little confused by his offer of company, but how to refuse it was the question; one thing, it was not far to Preston Street, and I could get rid of him there. But I did not know my man: it was blowing great guns, as they say, outside, and the rain came down too at intervals. Before we had got past the church railings I was glad enough of the arm he offered me. We did not do much talking by the way; the wind beat the conversation out of us; but he shouted out a few cheery words now and then, and, as far as I can remember, on subjects far removed from the sermon; I am not quite sure that it was not on art criticism, or something of the kind.

"Well, when we got to the Morrises, I just said a civil good-night, and thanked him; but he returned, 'No occasion,' and came in with me. I recollect that I had some difficulty in persuading him that he need not stand sponsor for the child, as it was evidently dying fast. I

believe he had some odd notions on the subject. Strange to say, we were only just in time—the poor little creature almost stiffened in my arms. 'Verily in the bosom of the Church,' he muttered, looking down on the dead baby much as though it were his own; 'poor little white-folded lamb!' And he spoke almost roughly to the poor mother when her tears dropped on the little dead face. 'Shame to let the salt of earth touch anything so pure,' he said.

"Well, hearing him speak so beautifully, and seeing how tender he was over the poor baby—he gave the parents money too, I am sure—it was rather a shock to me to hear him say when he came out—

"'I wish we had a nineteenth-century Herod.'

"'Why, in the name of Heaven?' I answered, quite dumbfounded at his vehemence.

"'Oh, I have shocked you, have I?' peering down at me in the darkness and shouting still, though the wind had lulled. 'I cannot help it; it is my misfortune to be always shocking some one: you are a clergyman, and you wont like to answer, but wouldn't it be a real deed of mercy to put nine-tenths of the infant population of England out of their misery in the quickest and most painless manner possible?'

"'Drown them like kittens, I suppose you mean?'"

"O Will, you never told me this part before—what a horrible man!"

"He smiled at my literal interpretation, but went on seriously—

"'Well, but of course the government must do it; we cannot have private murders.'

"'You prefer a wholesale slaughter of the innocents?'

"He nodded.

"'Sounds grimly, doesn't it?—I prefer handling the theory. Look at that babe we left just now, dead with the baptismal chrism still wet on its brow—what would it have been in a few years? Did you see that brute of a father? his hand, when he stretched it out for my bounty, felt like a drunkard's.'

"'Too true, I fear.'

"'Well, which do you prefer, the Union, or Paradise—an Inferno here with a doubtful hereafter, or the spotless rest of that poor baby? How could that child grow up good amidst those surroundings?'

"'Humph! vexed questions.'

"And then we plunged into a deeply interesting conversation which lasted till midnight."

"Just like your imprudence, Will. Of course you took him home?"

"Yes. When he found I would not stand outside, he allowed himself to be persuaded to enter; but I do not recollect that he took a seat, neither did he in the least enlighten me about himself; but of course I saw he was a gentleman and had received a university education."

"I suppose he found out then that you were a Balliol man?"

"Yes, we ran the gauntlet between Balliol

and Magdalen. I think it was that that stirred me up so, and made me forget the time."

"And he did not tell you his name?"

"No, not a bit of it. When I opened the door for him and wished him good night, he just vanished in the darkness, whisking away like a comet or Will-o'-the-wisp, or any other erratic substance."

"But you saw him again the next Sunday?"

"To be sure. I got a glimpse of him at the conclusion of my morning's sermon, sitting under the gallery, and I was not surprised when he followed me into the vestry. You recollect, Dym, I told you how interested he was in our schools."

"And that was the commencement of his work at St. Luke's? Really it is very extraordinary, Will."

"Yes, is it not? He worked, off and on, with me I should say six or seven weeks before he vanished for as many months; he was always coming and going when one least expected it."

"But he was a great help to you. I remember your writing to me and telling me a great deal of all this, and what a comfort he was to you in the night schools."

"Ah, I was new to my work then, and, before he came, the night schools were my bugbear. I was not so strong as I am now, and my lameness was against me; the boys would play tricks, and I could not always take summary

justice. I shall never forget the first evening I took Latimer down to my cub garden—didn't the cubs get it that night!"

"Serve them right too; those boys behaved shamefully. Mr. Benedict told me all about it."

"My dear, cubs want licking into shape; boys are rather rough in their play sometimes. I think Bill Saunders played his last trick when he blew out those candles."

"And Mr. Latimer relighted them?"

"Yes; how were the poor lambs to know he had a box of matches in his pocket? The sudden light threw them in confusion. How Bill howled for mercy!"

"Did Mr. Latimer thrash him?"

"Yes; and all the ringleaders besides. We have had order in the night schools since then. Mr. Benedict and I always call them 'Latimer's lambs.' You would not recognise one or two of my cubs now."

"I thought Bill Saunders was improved the last time I saw him."

"That he is; and he bears Mr. Latimer no malice either. An English lad is rather like a thorough-bred mastiff—never resents a just blow from a master's hand. Bill is always asking when Mr. Latimer is coming up: he is quite civil to me in his absence; and last winter the lad actually saved me from an awkward fall."

"Bravo, Bill! Do you know, Will, I quite long to see this Mr. Latimer, and thank him for helping you."

"Well, you will soon have your opportunity."

"What, is he coming up?"

"He will be at the schools to-night; but moderate your raptures. Mr. Latimer hates hero-worship as much as I do, and thanks are poison to him. Do you know, Dym, he is a curious mixture of reserve and frankness; with all his cheerfulness I have found out one thing."

"That he is not happy?"

"Yes."

"You ought to seek his confidence, Will. What's the good of being a clergyman if you cannot give comfort and advice where it is needed? Why don't you ask him straight out if he has anything on his mind?"

"Because I know that he has."

"O Will!" opening her eyes.

"I don't believe he has a murder on his conscience, or anything of that sort; it is evident to me that the man is only restless and ill at ease; he seems to me sometimes as though he were working against himself."

"But does he never talk about himself?"

"Very seldom, and then only vaguely; he hinted once that he was very rich, and wanted me to pity him for it. 'It is such a bore to have no aim in life,' he said to me; 'I tried to get into Parliament once, only the seat was sharply contested, and I had to give it up. One gets tired of travelling when one is always alone;' and one day he said something about only wishing for one thing, and not being able

to get it; but whether it was the seat in Parliament he was talking about, or a woman, or some pet ambition, I have not the slightest idea."

"But, Will, why don't you try to find out?"

"My dear, when you see the Unknown you can answer that question for yourself. Mr. Latimer is not a man one can question; he has his moments of frankness, but they never concern himself. Since that first time we met he has never spoken to me as though I were a clergyman; never sought advice in any way, I mean, and though I know he respects my cloth, he has very droll ways of showing it. Did you hear how he treated poor Ned Smithers?"

"Was that the boy whom you both nursed in the fever?"

"No, that was another case; this happened quite recently. No, I remember I never told you. Are you tired of the subject, Dym?"

"Tired of what interests you so? Fie, Will!"

"How can one help being interested!" he ejaculated; "such noble self-devotion and real Christianity hidden away under all that comical roughness. Well, Dym, I am quite sure the story is worth hearing. You know Brent's Buildings?"

"That queer little street turning out of Weedington Road?"

"Yes, a wretchedly poor neighbourhood. Well, we heard from young Shaw at the night schools that Ned Smithers had met with an accident, and was likely to do badly; and

Latimer said, as usual, he would go with me, and, if necessary, act as my almoner. Well, we went along as usual arm-in-arm—the giant and the dwarf, as some street wags once called us; and when we got to Brent's Buildings we found a very dismal state of things, and that it was all up with poor Ned."

"Do you mean that he was dying?"

"Dying; ah, but what a death! I wont harrow up your feelings, Dym, more than I can help. Poor Ned was always a drunkard and blasphemer: but the cursed drink was not the actual cause of his death. Those navvies run terrible risks. An embankment on the line of railway they were constructing gave way; two men were killed on the spot. Ned's injuries were no less mortal, but mortification had not yet put a stop to his agonies. I know what pain is, Dym, and how it taxes all a man's fortitude and Christianity to bear it; it makes me shudder even now to think of Ned writhing on his miserable couch, and poisoning the fetid air with his curses."

"O Will, please don't tell me any more."

"The picture will be less gloomy by-and-bye. How these people manage to exist is the wonder; navvies get good wages, but I suppose Ned had drunk his, for such abject poverty I had never seen before in my life; the brawny giant himself was lying on a heap of straw, with only an old blanket over him—fancy that, and a damp brick floor and no fire, on a cold winter's night. But worse than that, there was his poor wife,

only just recovered from her confinement, with miserable-looking twins in her arms: I never saw such a pitiable sight as that mother and her babies. 'Two of them, and smothering would be regarded as a sin,' I heard Latimer mutter to himself. I frowned at him, but he took no notice; he had propped himself up against the place where the mantelpiece ought to be, and stood frowning at them all the time I was reading and praying beside poor Ned, with the damp from the floor creeping into my bones."

"O Will! and with your rheumatism too."

"I think that is what made him interrupt us; for when I rose from my knees, there he was standing beside me. 'Hadn't you better leave off?' he said in that dry way of his; 'he hasn't been listening to a word—have you, Ned?'

"The man muttered something in answer; it sounded like 'parson be blowed.'"

"'There!' he exclaimed, turning on me triumphantly, 'I thought so; that's all you get for catching your death on those horrible flags.'

"'My dear Latimer,' I remonstrated gently, 'you must allow me to do what I consider to be my duty.'

"'Nonsense!' he returned; 'I never could tolerate a suicide; you had better leave Ned to me—I can manage him better.'

"I will not deny I was a little hurt.

"'My dear sir, this is not a layman's function.'

"'Pooh! nonsense; don't get hot about it: it is only a question whether there shall be two

dying men or one. Ned, haven't you had enough of the parson just now?'

"'Curse you! what do I want with either of you?' returned the man savagely. 'Can't a man die without having a couple of gents standing and staring and praying over him till his flesh creeps on his bones? Who wants your prayers? I'll die as I like;' and here he stretched out his huge fist and shook it at us—it might have felled an ox easily—and broke into language too horrible to relate.

"The blasphemy sickened me—I put my hands over my ears to escape it; the poor wife crept up to him timidly. 'O Ned, my man, hush thee; thee art frightening parson,' she cried.

"Latimer coolly took the man's fist in his, and examined it reflectively.

"'These are the thews and sinews of England they talk about. Ned, don't trouble yourself; I am not going to waste a single prayer on you, or the parson either; tell me, my man, how often have you turned this hand of yours against that poor wife?'

"'Sal knows,' sneered the man with a demoniacal laugh. 'Tell the gentlemen, Sal; served her right—a whining, white-faced——'

"Mr. Latimer quietly laid the fist down, and then deliberately shook his own in the savage's face.

"'You cowardly ruffian, if you were not a mass of broken bones I'd have it out with you. Look at that face—a young one, too. God in

heaven! to see a woman's face look like that, with all the comeliness bruised out of it;' and so righteous was his indignation, that the man actually cowered beneath his vehemence. Again the wife, womanlike, interfered.

"'Don't 'ee, sir, don't 'ee bully my master,' cried the poor creature, quite terrified and trembling, and pressing one of her babies more closely to her.

"'You go and sit down,' said Latimer not unkindly; 'women always make things worse with their meddling; I never bully any one but a coward. Ned, my man, we've had it out, and my feelings are a little relieved; I can't be hard on such a poor brute as you—a dying brute, too. Shake hands, and keep a civil tongue in your head. Now I daresay you have had enough talk, and would like a good fire and something warm to drink. I am going out with the parson to cater for you. We'll make Sal and you more comfortable before we've done with you.'

"Would you believe it, Dym, there were actually tears in the poor fellow's eyes?

"'That's what I call a gentleman,' he muttered; and without another word Latimer took my arm and hurried me from the room.

"Outside I attempted to remonstrate with him.

"'My dear Latimer, I daresay your way will answer best in the end; but to interfere between a priest and one of his flock——'

"'Go on,' he returned good-temperedly; 'words wont break bones, and I've got you out

of that damp vault alive. Faugh! how sweet the air is after it! twilight, too. Do you ever study astronomy, Elliott? I have a theory;' and then and there he propounded it, inveigling me so artfully in an argument that I never saw his drift till I found myself at my own door.

"'Good-night, Mr. Elliott; take my advice—have a good roaring fire and a strong dose of spirits-and-water, and then get quickly into bed.'

"'May I ask what you are going to do, Mr. Latimer?'

"'I! oh, I am going to cater presently, and then go back to Ned.'

"'So am I.'

"'Are you? There are locks and doors even in Brent's Buildings. Nay, Elliott, I am serious; this night's work is no joking matter to either of us. My dear fellow, though I am only a layman, I am stronger than you. Just take my advice for once; leave Ned this one night to me, and come first thing in the morning;' and, Dym, will you credit the fact? I was weak enough to obey him."

"O Will, I could almost love him for this; don't you see he knew it would be your death, and he just went on in that rough way to get you out of the place."

Mr. Elliott smiled. "I told you you would find my story interesting. Well, I felt pretty bad by that time, and was glad enough to follow his prescription. As it was, I had a terrible night of pain, and was only just able to hobble

down to Brent's Buildings in the morning; the sun cheered me up a little, though. When I got to the place, there was Latimer lolling against the railings and smoking a cigar, as though Brent's Buildings was the choicest neighbourhood, and he rather liked it than otherwise.

"'What sort of a night have you had? how is Ned?' I asked.

"'Bad, very bad—making for the other side rapidly, I am afraid; in other respects things are more satisfactory.'

"'How so?'

"'I don't think I have heard more than two dozen oaths, and he always apologizes for them afterwards—life habits, you see; we must not be too hard on him. But come in; I must not keep you standing in this cold wind.'

"He had said so little that I was not prepared for the changed aspect of things. Mr. Latimer and his coadjutors had done wonders. Ned could not be moved, it was true—those mangled limbs must remain as they were to the last; but there was plenty of clean warm covering over him, and a bright fire burned in the grate. The poor wife sat beside it in a comfortable chair propped up with pillows, with one twin in her lap; the other, alas, lay in a white wrapper on a shelf.

"'Yes, it is gone,' whispered Mr. Latimer, noticing my look. 'The poor little thing had convulsions in the night, and before I could fetch a doctor it was gone; pity the other does not follow. That's the fourth child she has lost.'

"I said a few soothing words to the mother, who was fondling her remaining baby, dry-eyed. I suppose constant misery dries up the fount of tears; and when I turned to Ned's bedside I was surprised to find he greeted me with considerably less roughness.

"'He's ready for the parson now, you see,' said Latimer, who still followed me; he's had some of the doctor's good stuff, and is rather more free from pain. He can listen to you now; can't you, Ned?'

"'Yes, if parson pleases. You bean't a-going, sir?' looking at him wistfully.

"'Not for long. I'll be back by-and-bye; by the time you want me.'

"'Thank you, sir.'

"'And, Ned my man, you'll keep your word, and make a clean breast to the parson?'

"'Yes, sir; yes.'

"'This poor fellow,' putting his hand on his shoulder, and pressing it lightly, 'tells me that he has been a great sinner; he almost murdered a man once; didn't you, Ned?'

"'Yes, one of my mates; they locked me up for it, though.'

"'And he says that he has been a bad husband to Sal; pretty nearly starved her and her children. And he wants to know, Mr. Elliott—you being a clergyman and understanding such things—whether he has any cause to hope that he will ever see his little boy again. It seems, since his boy's death, he has taken to drinking.

"'Ay, to drown thought. He were sich a pretty little chap, were Charlie; and he minded me rarely. "Where's daddie?" he used to call out, as soon as ever he could speak. You mind it, Sal.' And the man wiped away a tear furtively with his sleeve.

"'And he wants to know if he shall ever see Charlie again. Now, Mr. Elliott, your work is cut out for you;' and then this singular being did consent to leave us alone together."

"And did he die, Will?"

"Yes; but not for a good many days after that. It was very uphill work with him; but, thank God, he made an edifying end. Not that he ever said much to me; but he seemed grateful, and liked to hear me read and pray by him; just a few words at the last made me feel the man was really a penitent.

"'You gentle'em,' he said, speaking with difficulty, for the end was drawing near; 'you gentle'em will walk head erect into heaven. If the good Lord will only let me creep in just at the last, I'd be more than content.'

"'On your hands and knees,' quoth Latimer. 'Well put, my man.'

"'And, Sal, my lass, you must mind what parson sees, and try for to come in afterwards. I've not been a good master to you, my woman, but it is too late to say naught about that; now maybe you'll get a better master nor I, when I'm cold.'

"'Nay, Ned. I never went fur to think of such a thing,' cried the poor thing, panting and

sobbing; 'but for the drink we might have been so comfortable like.'

"'Ah,' murmured the dying man, 'thou art about right, Sal. Don't let Charlie drink; it is a pity to let a little chap like that get into mischief. Charlie lad, you are tired maybe; let dad carry you,' he muttered on drowsily. When it came to the last, he would keep his face to Mr. Latimer; and once made a groping on the bedclothes, as though for his hand.

"'I'm a-creeping in, sir,' he said once with a sudden brightening—those were his last words. My dear child"—for Dym was crying softly to herself—"I ought not to have saddened you like this, and on your first evening too."

"Oh but, Will, it is so beautiful; no wonder you say Mr. Latimer has something great about him."

"Yes; but you must not raise your expectations too high, or you might be disappointed when you see him. Well, what is it, Dick?"

"Mr. Latimer, sir."

"Here? Oh, what shall I do?" cried Dym excitedly, trying to clear away the traces of her tears.

"Don't be frightened, miss; Mr. Latimer ain't a-coming in. He left word for you, sir, that as you had a lady with you he would not interrupt you, but that you would see him at the schools."

"Dear me, I never knew him to do that before," returned Mr. Elliott, looking puzzled; then, as the boy closed the door, "It must be

because you are with me, Dym; and yet he is the last man to be shy of a lady; what an enigma he is, to be sure! Well," in a tone of regret, "I must be off now. Perhaps he will come in with me by-and-bye; anyhow, I am sorry you are disappointed."

"Disappointed! not at all," returned Dym contradictorily. "There, run off, Will, you will be late;" and when she had watched her brother out, Dym sat down and thought of Mr. Latimer for the rest of the evening.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RIGHTS AND WRONGS OF WOMEN.

CONTRARY to Dym's expectations, Mr. Latimer did not make his appearance in Paradise Row that evening, nor on many succeeding evenings; he had always some excuse ready when William Elliott pressed him to accompany him home on the nights when they were at work together at the schools. Dym, who at first looked for him with some eagerness, at last relinquished her watch in despair.

When life is monotonous, trifles appear of magnitude. In the confined landscape of Paradise Row, Mr. Latimer's figure loomed gigantic in the foreground. Dym, out of natural contradiction, longed to brush it out; womanlike, she revolted against the vagueness and mystery; she wanted the dim outline to gain form and colouring. But soon her thoughts were directed into another channel.

William Elliott had acceded, with evident reluctance, to Dym's plan of seeking employment as daily governess; but though her efforts were most persevering, they had not as yet met with success.

Either education was at a low ebb or governesses were at a discount in Kentish Town. Dym tried Haverstock Hill and even Hampstead, but the market seemed overstocked. A great commercial panic had taken place in the City a few months previously, and scores of girls, younger and less well-educated than Dym, had been thrown on their own resources—girls luxuriously brought up, and taught everything but to govern themselves and teach others, were driven from the fastnesses of happy homes and launched suddenly upon the world. Incompetence seeking competence; youth and helplessness going hand-in-hand to find a stewardship, where they could starve themselves and bring others to beggary.

And the beggary of the heart and mind—what more pitiable than that!

Dym's neat little figure traversed miles of pavement in answer to countless advertisements, but she never found anything to suit; her youth was against her. Sometimes people told her to her face that she was not good-tempered; at such moments Dym could not always repress her impatience and disappointment. "This situation would quite suit me," she said once, when she was weary of doors closing against her—"only two little girls; I will not quarrel about the terms."

"Pardon me, but you will not suit me, Miss Elliott," returned the lady coldly. "You are too brusque and decided for such a young person; let me tell you, for your future guidance, that mothers like to have the management of

their own children; you have set aside my remarks once or twice already."

"I have not always given satisfaction, but I have good references," faltered Dym, more humbly.

"I do not doubt it; forgive me if I pain you, but you do not look old enough, nor yet sufficiently staid for me to entrust my girls to your care."

Very much the same thing was repeated at the next house, where Dym found herself in the presence of a very strong-minded woman, evidently one of those original characters who combine domesticity with plenty of public speaking.

Dym found out, years afterwards, that this lady was a member of the school-board, that she spoke on public platforms, and was conspicuous for her advocacy of the rights of women. On the present occasion she very soon inspired our little heroine with a painful degree of awe.

"Well, why have you come to me?" began the strong-minded matron in a loud, manly voice. Afterwards, Dym thought the voice not an unpleasant one. "Seeking a governess's situation, are you? Absurd! you are too young. What do you say—you can't help your age? No, but you can speak louder while you are about it. Tut! go home to your mother, child; we have too many incompetent young persons in the present day applying to us as governesses—a pack of useless rubbish; it cannot be every girl's vocation to teach—whether they are qualified for it or no; we ought to subject the thing to competitive

examination. Why shouldn't women take their degree, I should like to know?" for this was in the days before the Cambridge examination for women.

"I am not quite incompetent," interrupted Dym in a frightened voice; "I know French and German—I can talk French almost as well as English—and if the children be young——"

"Who said the children were young? One is not bound to state their ages in an advertisement; my eldest girl looks almost as old as you, only of course she has masters. French and German—trash! The question is, are you up in algebra and mathematics generally; have you any idea of geology; do you know what a strata means; or in architecture could you give me the history of the several transition periods; do you know more than the fancy work of botany—in a word, could you administer education in any other than homœopathic quantities? There, go home to your mother, girl!"

"I have no mother," returned Dym, vainly trying to repress her tears. "Of course I could not teach your daughters all those things; I thought, perhaps, you had younger children, or——"

"My youngest is over twelve," replied the matron, a little less grimly; "she is working hard at classics with a tutor now. Why shouldn't women teach classics, I should like to know? I hate men about a house—clergymen especially. Got no mother you say, child—'bleating about the world like an unfolded lamb,' as Elizabeth

Barrett-Browning has it. What is it she says? and

> 'Felt a mother-want about the world,
> And still went seeking, like a bleating lamb
> Left out at night in shutting up the fold.'

Sad, sad;" and the strong-minded lady actually sighed. "Jane," she continued, ringing loudly, "bring this young lady some wine and cake; she has had a long walk, and is tired." And after that touch of motherly kindness, Dym did not find her voice loud.

She warmed up into something like confidence over the cake and wine, and her attempt was met by good nature.

"Of course you must work, child, every one must. Why are we sent into the world, except to do our part thoroughly? Why, I work myself," waving a large benevolent-looking hand with plenty of rings on it, and pointing to the massive handsome furniture. "I suppose people would consider me very rich—I don't know; I leave all that to Mr. Garnet. I only know I work as hard as any charwoman from morning to night; why, I have a ladies' committee on for this very afternoon."

"Don't let me detain you," said Dym timidly.

"I shouldn't let any one—not the Prime Minister himself—detain me. I am not to be detained. By-and-bye, when the world is a little more educated to the notion, why shouldn't a woman be Prime Minister?" And Dym, tickled by the sudden transition, and the absurdity of

the idea, actually burst out laughing; she looked a little foolish though when Mrs. Garnet stopped and asked why.

"Why? Oh, because—because the very idea seems so strange."

"All new ideas are strange. Who was the first Queen on record? Dido or Candace or—come, being a governess you ought to know; I have a better memory for statistics. Well, whoever she was—black, brown, or white—did not the Conservative party in her generation, think you, consider a woman on the throne a very shocking idea?"

This was beyond our small governess, so she only remarked, "I daresay."

"A safe answer. You know how to trim your sails, Miss Elliott. Well, why would it be worse having a woman for a Prime Minister than for a queen to be on the throne?"

"She couldn't do all the work," suggested Dym, with a very vague idea of what Prime Ministers had to do.

"That remains to be proved. Of course it would not be in my time, or in yours either; we have to educate our men, and our women too, up to it; women must vote and sit in Parliament before that comes to pass—ah, one must not look too far forward. I have a theory, only I haven't time to work it out, that perfection will only precede dissolution—that, in short, the world is gradually wearing itself out. What do you want, Camellia?" to a pale, fashionable-looking young lady who entered the drawing-room at

this juncture, and who had evidently been reared at a forcing temperature.

"I did not know you were engaged, mother; only Madame Bousanquet has sent home your bonnet with ostrich instead of marabout feathers."

"Dear, dear, and I wanted it for this very afternoon; how very trying, Camellia! It is impossible I can appear on the platform in my old blue one."

"Quite impossible. Lady Vaughan would think it a slight to her party." And seeing that this trifling incident was really troubling the minds of both mother and daughter—in spite of the speedy dissolution of things material—Dym took a hasty leave of her kind-hearted entertainer.

She returned thoroughly disheartened by this afternoon's work, and almost with a despairing resolve to give up teaching altogether and take in plain sewing, "that is, if Will will let me," thought the poor girl, dragging her feet wearily over the threshold. But she was too used to disappointment by this time to make any special complaint. She just put her head in the door and said, in a voice that feigned cheerfulness and belied her face—

"It is *nil desperandum*, Will, to the end of the chapter."

"Well said; a brave remark, and womanlike too," accompanied by a sigh. "Suppose you follow your observation into the room, Miss Elliott."

The voice was not Will's. Dym's heart

began to beat more quickly. Could it be the Unknown at last? What a ridiculous way to announce herself! Strange to say, the voice sounded somewhat familiarly to her; she advanced into the room feeling very foolish, and confronted—Mr. Chichester.

"Why, it—it is you!" she exclaimed, breathless with astonishment.

"Yes, it is I, quite true; do you often indulge in such clever remarks, Miss Elliott? I beg your pardon. I was under the idea you were going to shake hands, but you are too much occupied in questioning my identity. By the beard of my father," stroking his placidly, "have you forgotten me already?"

"No; oh, how rude I must seem! But I can't help being surprised to see you sitting there, when I only expected to see Will."

"Was your proverbial philosophy intended for Will, then?"

"Of course it was; and then to find you here, Mr. Chichester!"

"Oh, I told you it would be *au revoir.* Really, Miss Elliott, I am the humblest fellow breathing, but I could almost believe you were glad to see me."

"So I am—very glad indeed," repeated Dym, with the simple honesty of a child; and Mr. Chichester looked pleased. "How long have you been here—have you seen my brother—and where is he? Did you really find your way to Kentish Town from Lansdowne House?"

Mr. Chichester held up his hands appealingly.

"One question at a time; what, all those to answer! Supposing we each take a seat, Miss Elliott," suiting the action to his word, and resuming Will's favourite lounging chair. "There, I know exactly why you have chosen that seat, back to the light—you want me not to see that Kentish Town air has not agreed with you."

"It agrees with me perfectly," argued Dym stoutly.

"Pardon me, you are too *pâle et triste,* as Mrs. Vivian says. What a female she is! Are some women created in a bandbox? Mrs. Vivian always looks as though she has just stepped out of one. Please do not mention her name if you wish to keep me in a good temper, Miss Elliott."

"How does Edith get on with her?" asked Dym, passing over the fact magnanimously that Mr. Chichester, and not she, had first mentioned that lady's name; and why did he call her triste and pale, when she was sure she was neither?

"Well, she does not get on at all; it is breaking a butterfly on the wheel to put my little pet under the domination of such a woman. After all, Miss Elliott, Edith's guardian was obliged to interfere—officially, I mean Mrs. Vivian will not trouble Lansdowne House. long."

"And you have really dismissed her?"

Dym said no more, but inwardly she felt a little hurt. If Mr. Chichester were really

Edith's guardian, and had been invested with full control over the child, why had he not exerted his authority to keep the governess whom Edith loved? Had he not very plainly testified to his cousin's injustice in sending her away without due cause? But why had he not prevented it? Surely, surely it must be because he himself had thought her unfit for her post.

"Please let me have the benefit, Miss Elliott. I have a troublesome knack of reading people's thoughts."

Dym started and coloured; and then, becoming more conscious that Mr. Chichester's grave, quizzical eyes were reading her truly, became so exceedingly hot, that even he had compassion on her.

"Never mind, if you did harbour such a thought; it was a perfectly natural one, though somewhat difficult to answer. I am rather a contradictory character, Miss Elliott; I have scruples of conscience, as other people have, and one of these scruples concerned you."

"Me!"

Dym was too shame-faced and crestfallen to say more. Had a fresh monitor arisen to rebuke her thoughtlessness in the person of Guy Chichester?

"Ungrateful, wasn't it, after your kindly ministrations too? When I have another headache, I think I must send for you. You have taken care, you see, that you shall never be forgotten in one capacity. Why not take to sick-nursing, Miss Elliott, and abandon teaching?"

"I can guess what you think of me, by that one speech;" in a tone more humble than Dym generally used. People could be humble before Guy Chichester without feeling themselves humiliated; it is so that real superiority asserts itself.

"How can you tell what I think of you? I am far too young a man—please to recollect I am not thirty-five yet—to render it perfectly safe to act as Mentor to any young ladies."

"Neither do I desire to be your Telemachus," returned Dym, somewhat audaciously, exasperated by this covert rebuke.

"Exactly so. Perhaps I may say I do like your thorough honesty; it is a quality so unique in these present times. Do you know, Miss Elliott, I have come to the conclusion, from the little I have seen of you, that we are both unlike any one else in the world?"

"You are, Mr. Chichester;" the tone scarcely modified yet.

"I suppose you did not mean to be personal, but those two monosyllables were very expressive; and then is it not strange that we both labour under the same misfortune?"

His manner was so entirely changed, so solemn even, that Dym looked up.

"What is that, Mr. Chichester?"

"We both have—will my plain speaking offend you, I wonder?"

"No, oh no."

"A bad temper."

What a pleasant hearing for Dym! She sat absolutely dumb. In another moment Mr.

Chichester was standing before her, holding out his hand.

"Please forgive me."

"For what?" returned Dym stiffly, but making up her mind, nevertheless, that she would never forgive him; that she hated—yes, she hated him!

"Oh, I am so sorry. Why did you provoke me to it by your honesty? You are so unconventional, that I thought you would not mind unconventionality in return. What a fool I have been, and what a mistake I have made!"

"Not at all; but you have departed very quickly from your resolution."

"An enigma—unriddle the Sphinx, please."

"Not to say what you think of me," returned Dym, biting her lip.

"Well retorted. But Mentor did not claim the same faults as Telemachus. I put myself in the same category, Miss Elliott, as your fellow-sinner; please remember that. Well, Guy Chichester, this is a lesson to you, my good fellow, not to be such a fool again as to believe any woman, at any age, can bear to hear the truth."

"You are making things worse, instead of better, Mr. Chichester, to be told now that I cannot bear the truth:" in a lamentable voice of injured innocence.

Mr. Chichester rubbed his hands with a comical gesture of despair. If only Dym could feel he was not enjoying himself at her expense!

"There, again, I'm done for—head and heels

over into the Slough of Despond, and not a hand even to help me out. Miss Elliott, in most cases something undera duel—say, an apology—is supposed to make full amends. Come, Miss Elliott, be generous; I do so hate giving a fellow-creature pain;" and there was such a winning look of bonhomie in Guy Chichester's eyes, that Dym's brief hatred died away, and her pride with it.

"There, then, I forgive you, will that do?"

"Shake hands, then, like men and brothers—sisters—what do I mean?" And thereupon a very healing laugh broke from Dym's lips.

"That's right; I thought you had forgotten how to laugh in Kentish Town. Do you recollect what fun we used to have in Edith's sick-room?"

"You and Edith you mean."

"True; you held yourself somewhat aloof from our frivolity. Nevertheless, I have often heard suppressed sounds from your corner. Do you recollect my story of 'The House of Cards?"

"Wait a moment, Mr. Chichester; please don't go on just yet. I want to tell you something."

"What?"

"That you were right about my temper."

"Halloa! Honesty without her mask again."

"I was only a little put out that you should notice it so soon. I am rather sore on this subject, Mr. Chichester; my temper is my bane."

"Get rid of it, then."

"Good advice; but how to follow it?"

"Throw it off as Sindbad did the Old Man of the Sea. How old are you, Miss Elliott? Another plain question."

"Eighteen."

"Age of innocence! eighteen *versus* three-and-thirty. My dear Miss Elliott, you will never make me believe your Old Man of the Sea is as formidable or sticks half so hard as mine."

Dym leant her chin on her hand and regarded him fixedly.

"Wherefore that inquisitorial glance?"

"You really have a bad temper, Mr. Chichester?"

"I advise you not to ask."

"Why?"

"My answer might frighten you."

"I thought so," in a cheerful tone, "but," hesitating, "I suppose people like you in spite of it."

"My mother does."

"Oh, mothers always do; but other people who know you well, are they afraid of you?"

"They would be if they saw me in one of my bad moods; but come, come, I am not going to put myself in the pillory, as an example and warning to naughty girls and boys. I am a terrible fellow when you come to know me, Miss Elliott; but I suppose I have my good points. I must have," suddenly changing his voice, and sighing. "My dear Miss Elliott, you and I have been running a tilt, half in jest and half in earnest, *pour passer le temps.*

It is pleasant pastime, but there's many a true word spoken in jest. I was a little impertinent to you just now."

"No, pray do not say so."

"Truth will out, you see. I told you I had scruples of conscience about retaining you as Edith's governess, when a word from me would have turned the scale. If I did not speak that word, it was not because I believed all my cousin's accusation. From the first, I felt her to be manifestly unjust, and I preferred to judge for myself."

"And your verdict was against me?"

"Not altogether," with a merry twinkle of the eye, "only I felt you were unfit for your position. Edith, it is true, had not suffered from your caprice; but she might. There was affection between you, but, pardon me, Miss Elliott, no wise guiding."

"I tried my best," very softly.

"No one could know you even a little and not see that; but take the word of a spoilt child of Fortune, who knows better how to preach than to practise—don't waste your life in making vain efforts. Strike out new paths for yourself—rise above mere conventionality—be true to your own nature. You have not patience or temper, or the mellowed wisdom of experience to fit you for a guide of youth; you want to be in leading-strings yourself yet; you will not do for a governess, but you will make a capital sick-nurse."

Dym shuddered.

"You do not like my suggestion."

"To be in a sick-room all one's life—no, oh no!"

"You want something gayer and more varied. You surprise me. I should have held it to be woman's noblest vocation."

"That is what Will always says," shrugging her shoulders.

"Sensible Will; but what is the good of talking sense to unwilling ears? Miss Elliott, I told you before that I was very anxious to repair my cousin's injustice, and to help you by any means within my power; the question is how?"

"True." Dym uttered the word slowly. "Then you don't think I shall ever do well as a governess?"

"It is not your vocation."

"Vocation! I hate the word; it seems to bind one down so. Do you think I might go out as a companion, Mr. Chichester?"

"The very thing. I wonder your friends have not thought of it before. A good thought, Miss Elliott. Ah, did you see that shadow across the window? I believe it must be your brother."

Dym sprang up and opened the door.

"What, Dym, only just come back?"

"There, I've had my hat on all this time, and never knew it. O Will, how late you are, and just when I wanted you so!"

"Wanted me? Why, what is the matter? What a colour you've got, Dym! Why,

Latimer, you don't mean to say you've honoured us at last?"

"Better late than never: your sister has been entertaining me for the last hour. Miss Elliott, without being personal—a thing I detest—may I remark you are opening your eyes rather widely?"

"O Will—the Unknown. Why, this—this is my Mr. Chichester, the one I spoke to you about—Edith's guardian I mean," finished Dym, feeling she was explaining herself very badly.

"Guy Latimer Chichester, at your service," remarked that individual coolly, taking no notice of Dym's unfortunate possessive pronoun. "There, murder will out, Elliott; your sister has betrayed me, and now is your mind relieved?"

"Very much so," replied William Elliott frankly. "I hate fictitious sobriquets—everything fair and open for me. If I had known Latimer was really your baptismal name, it would not have stuck so often in my throat; anyhow, I am thankful you are not an earl's son in disguise; simple Guy Chichester, I suppose?"

"I sometimes take an esquire at the end," responded Mr. Chichester dryly. "What a family yours is for honesty! your sister there is like a pane of glass."

Dym laughed and ran out of the room, on hospitable thoughts intent. Mr. Chichester, her unknown hero, the wonderful Mr. Latimer; it

was too strange, too delightful altogether; and she had been nearly quarrelling with him, too, when all the time he had been Will's friend, who had helped him so. Dym felt she could never be sufficiently contrite.

When she had finished her little preparations—not forgetting to don her smartest ribbons in honour of the occasion—Dym went back to the sitting-room and marched up straight to Mr. Chichester.

"I have been thinking it all over, and I have so often wanted to thank you."

"To thank me, for what? I will thank you presently, when you have given me some tea."

"I thought you were getting it ready, Dym."

"So I was; it will be here directly, Will; don't be impatient. But, Mr. Chichester, I cannot be happy till I have thanked you for all you have done for Will and St. Luke's. For what are you looking?" for Mr. Chichester, red in the face, was groping mysteriously under his chair.

"For my hat; I think I have mislaid it."

"Here it is; take it away, Dym, hide it somewhere. You foolish girl, didn't I tell you Mr. Latimer hated gratitude?"

"Was it that that was driving him away? Sit down, Mr. Chichester; you shall have your tea directly." And with much tact Dym bustled about, and, aided by her brother, soon produced a creditable enough looking meal, during the course of which Mr. Chichester gradually recovered his equanimity.

What a pleasant evening that was! the pleasantest, Dym thought, that she had ever spent. And before the end of it she had achieved one success—Mr. Chichester pronounced her a good listener. High praise from a clever man.

As a general rule men prefer responsive to suggestive powers in a woman. A woman whose intellect is ambitious enough to emulate the other sex is rarely a favourite with either. The bright intelligence that can appreciate without deterioration; that can, if occasion require, sum up into brief review the salient points of an argument or a thing discussed; that can even weigh and judge its merits without obtruding contradiction and opinionativeness—this is justly prized by men; and a listener, be she an intelligent one, is worth half a score of clever talkers.

Dym could talk cleverly sometimes, but she loved better to listen, and especially to such men as Will and Guy Chichester. Both men of no mean order of intellect. Mr. Chichester combined rare eloquence with much native shrewdness; his mode of speech was always abrupt, but now and then it would be startling; his discourse, when on most solemn subjects, would be varied by lightning-like flashes of metaphor or humour. Will was a more even speaker.

Both men talked well.

Guy Chichester was the more daring in his speculations; William Elliott felt more.

Dym, sitting by in unconscious criticism, thought Guy Chichester was far the grandest

talker she had ever heard in her life; but Will's words came home nearest to her heart.

The priest prevailed over the layman; not by virtue of his office, truth compelling me to avow Guy Chichester was a Broad Churchman, but simply because the priest had lived out his own convictions, not taught them simply.

And this was the secret of the strange bond that already bound these two men together—mutual respect on the one side developing into reverence, on the other into hero-worship, not unmixed with pity; for William Elliott had already discovered that Guy Chichester was his own enemy.

CHAPTER VII.

A GLIMPSE INTO THE HAPPY VALLEY.

DYM had sufficient leisure to think over her pleasant evening, for Mr. Chichester never came near them for a whole week after this—nay more, he was missing at the school.

Dym marvelled greatly over this sudden disappearance, but her brother took the matter more coolly. "You don't suppose we keep this sort of *rara avis* permanently at St. Luke's," he said. "Very likely he has gone back to his own people, and forgotten all about us, till the next ill wind blows him southward again—a random shot which on this occasion was tolerably wide of the mark; but Dym shook her head, and would not be convinced.

"He would have said good-bye to us if he were not coming back," she persisted; and she looked up every time Will came in from his evening work with the hope that Mr. Chichester was with him.

And, as usual, he appeared when she least expected him.

It was a very wet Sunday evening—there

had been a ceaseless down-pour most of the afternoon—and only a small congregation, chiefly women and boys—had collected in the evening, in the hope of hearing the strange preacher, Mr. Ainslie: had Mr. Elliott preached, even that scanty aggregate would have been diminished by at least one-third, for the parish of St. Luke's was not the most God-fearing and church-going parish in Kentish Town. Dym was standing up in a great square pew under the west window, singing at the top of her clear young voice, and watching the raindrops patter against the glass. When the organ ceased, she almost fancied she could hear its rippling groans, and the soughing of the light summer wind in its branches; the heavy drops splashed outside. "Brief life is here our portion, brief sorrow, short-lived care—" sang Dym. A hand from behind her came abruptly on her book, with an admonitory finger of caution—she was singing the wrong verse.

Dym's sweet contralto broke down altogether then. The old blind man at her side went quavering on, "The life that knows no ending;" a magnificent bass voice caught up the refrain, and carried it on. Dym had never heard the voice, but she knew the great brown hand, with the Oriental signet on the little finger. The sudden reproof abashed her; she did not get cool all the rest of the service.

She took the blind man out carefully, and found her unconscious tormentor waiting for her in the porch.

"Well, shall we go on, or shall we wait for your brother?" he demanded, unfurling a formidable-looking umbrella, after a glance of disdain at Dym's neat little gingham one. "Don't trouble yourself to open that; it will do for Edith's doll."

"I always wait for Will. Good evening, Mr. Chichester," with a dignified little inclination of the head, which said plainly," We have not met before to-day, I believe."

"Oh, good evening, Miss Elliott," lifting his hat, and making her a profound salaam, which at once made Dym feel her observation was superfluous. "What creatures of habit we are—are we not? In strict accordance with the truth you ought to have said, 'A bad evening, Mr. Chichester;' but perhaps you only meant a more ceremonious way of saying, 'How do you do?'"

Dym was glad that she had to bow to a chance acquaintance who was passing—it saved her the trouble of replying. When she looked round, Mr. Chichester had closed his umbrella again, and was thoughtfully engaged in probing the probable thickness of the flags. Dym, who felt every one was criticising her tall distinguished-looking companion, drew back further into the porch.

"Don't let me detain you," she whispered nervously. Mr. Chichester was evidently in one of his unapproachable moods to-night, and Dym was a little afraid of her *tête-à-tête*.

"Our ways lie together," he replied. "How

light it is still out here in spite of the rain! The old Puritan who constructed that consecrated barn," nodding his head slightly towards the red-baize door, "has spoiled his best windows by that hideous gallery. No wonder you could not see to sing your hymn correctly."

"O, Mr. Chichester, how could you?"

"What?" looking as innocent as a lamb on a large scale.

"How could you startle me so? It put me out dreadfully."

"To have a great brown paw laid on your book?" stretching it out mischievously. "Serves you right, Miss Elliott; you were torturing my ear needlessly."

"You ought to have been singing yourself. I don't pity you," a little defiantly.

"Upon my honour, I am very sorry for you though, Miss Elliott. Think of next Ash Wednesday—how uncomfortable you will feel during the Commination Service; leading that poor blind man all wrong, too."

Dym looked shocked.

"I suppose you can sing properly if you try."

"Will says so."

"What! Will Clericus! Never believe brothers, they are such flatterers. Yes, you have a nice little lark-like voice, if you only cultivated it properly; the high notes were not satisfactory though."

Dym inwardly resolved she would never sing

in Mr. Chichester's presence again—a vow which circumstances soon obliged her to break.

"What a nice sermon Mr. Ainslie preached! Don't you think so?" trying to turn the conversation into a less personal channel.

"No, I don't," kicking the baize door lightly with his foot, and looking a little vexed.

"Why not?"

"Because—now, Miss Elliott, don't—you know I hate criticising sermons."

"Do you? How could I know? Ah, there is Will, and Mr. Ainslie with him. You will be glad of that; wont you, Mr. Chichester?"

"You will you mean. It struck me we were rather boring each other;" a bit of honesty which somehow chilled Dym.

She walked home in silence, under the shelter of the big umbrella, between her brother and Mr. Chichester. Will had to warn her sometimes of the deep puddles. The meeting had disappointed her. Instinctively she felt Mr. Chichester's manner had a little changed—it was less genial and more authoritative. Somehow, even during the time she was Edith's governess, she had never before realized the great distance between them. Afterwards she understood that Guy Chichester had set up this slight barrier intentionally, though such was the man's unconventionality, that he was often the first to break it down.

At their door he shook hands, and wished them good-night.

"What! you are not coming in?" asked Will, in surprise.

"No, my dear fellow; no, not to-night. I have an appointment down due west; my cousin Beatrix has invited me to a family council."

"Then why in the world did you tramp down here in the wet?" persisted his friend, laying a detaining hand on his arm.

"Not to hear Mr. Ainslie preach—no, nor you either, so don't expect a compliment. I came to deliver this;" taking a letter carefully from his breast-pocket, and handing it to Dym.

"For me?"

"Look at the direction," was the curt rejoinder.

Dym read: "Miss Elliott, care of the Reverend William Elliott," written in a flowing lady's hand; then she turned it over, and examined the crest: "*Qui patitur vincit*,—He conquers who endures."

"Why, that's our motto, Will."

"Impossible! It is our crest," interrupted Mr. Chichester. "The letter is from my mother. Are the Chichesters and Elliotts related to each other, then?"

"From your mother!" breathlessly came from Dym.

Her brother took the envelope quietly from her hand and examined it.

"The clasped hands over the shield—yes, that is ours. I believe, if the truth were known, we are sixth or seventh cousins removed—that is, if you are the Chichesters of Ingleside."

"Yes, of course," somewhat impatiently.

"I saw the family tree once somewhere. I know a Miss Fortescue, my mother's cousin, married a Chichester; and I believe, in a previous generation, there were other intermarriages between the Chichesters and Elliotts. I know my grandfather's name was Chichester Elliott, and my own name is Fortescue."

"Yes, I see; how droll! pleasant though. I wonder what my mother would say to it, if I told her I had found some new cousins. I don't think Beatrix would be quite pleased"—with a smile at Dym, who was still standing perplexedly in the doorway. "Is your branch of the family quite extinct?"

Will pointed to Dym and himself.

"Humph! worthy representatives. I don't think we can quite claim cousinship though, much as I should like it; the honour is too far removed for that; but I think I will plague Beatrix about our new relations."

"Please, don't," broke out involuntarily from Dym. "But, Mr. Chichester, what makes your mother write to me?"

"Open it and see. But here I am keeping you both standing in the wet—good-night. By-the-bye, Miss Elliott," coming back a few steps and speaking mysteriously, "you will not send your answer without letting me know what it is to be."

"But where am I to find you, Mr. Chichester?"

"Where, oh, where?" in a light mocking voice. "Let me see; I have acted postman

once in your behalf, so shall I do so again? Don't send your letter till you see me."

And after issuing this peremptory order, Mr. Chichester again lifted his hat and departed.

"Now, Dym, for the letter," cried Will, when she had taken off her damp cloak and had entered the sitting-room. "How long do you suppose my patience can wait?"

And Dym, whose hot cheeks had not yet cooled from the excitement, drew her stool forward, and suffered her brother to read it over her shoulder.

"What a long letter! O Will!"

"Hush; we will talk about it afterwards."

And Dym gave one little grasp, and hurried on.

"'My dear Miss Elliott,' it began. "What nice writing!" murmured Dym. "'My dear Miss Elliott, my son will have mutually introduced us to each other, and I do not think I need apologize for writing to you. I have long felt a great interest in your brother, from my son's account of him.'" "Much obliged to her," here came from Will, but Dym pinched him to be quiet. "'He is doing a noble work for St. Luke's, and needs all the help that our prayers and the prayers of the faithful can give him, to strengthen his hands in such an unequal contest; and though a perfect stranger to me, I need not say I have long included St. Luke's in my lists of intercessions.'" Will's face looked so droll at this juncture, that Dym threatened to finish the letter by herself. "No, no; she means

well; we are coming to the real business directly;" and they both read on—

"'My son tells me that you have lived for some little time with my sister, Mrs. Tressilian, in the capacity of Edith's governess, and that, owing to some disagreement with my eldest niece, you were obliged to leave Lansdowne House rather suddenly. Perhaps, as my son says there were faults on both sides, I had better not enter on this part of the subject.' "Quite right," muttered Dym; "what business has Mr. Chichester's mother to interfere?" but she cooled down a little farther on. "'My son hints that teaching is not your vocation, and that your friends wish to see you in some other capacity. I am greatly in need myself of a pleasant intelligent young lady, who would act as my companion. Do you think this would suit you? My son says it will exactly. I advise you, before you decide, to talk it over with him.

"'But, my dear Miss Elliott, it will be necessary for me to confide in you a little, in order that you may understand your future duties, should you think fit to accept my offer. I am afraid—for human nature is weak, and I may say I am afraid—that it may please Providence, in its mysterious dispensation, to afflict me with the loss of sight. I have been told by one of our first oculists that a cataract is slowly forming in one eye, and lately there have been the same symptoms in the other. If this goes on—and I still shrink from the necessary operation—this must result in ultimate blindness, to

which, I confess, I look forward with some dread.

"'You will be kind enough not to mention this to my son, as I am happy to state that he is still in ignorance of all this; and as the knowledge would distress him greatly, I wish it to be kept from him as long as possible. Perhaps his opportune suggestion of my having a companion to amuse me may help to defer this knowledge, as he will not notice my increasing helplessness quite so soon.

"'I can still write, but with difficulty, only all books are forbidden me; a good reader is therefore indispensable. And as my son tells me you have a fair voice and pleasant intonation, you will be a great acquisition to me, especially if you also relieve me of all necessary correspondence, and assist me in the several branches of needlework, from which, I am thankful to say, I am not as yet debarred.

"'I will leave my son to arrange about terms; perhaps we might say a hundred a year, if that will meet your views. I shall be glad if you will now communicate with me personally by letter, as, in the event of your acceptance, it would be as well that we should not remain strangers to each other.—With kind regards to your brother, I remain, dear Miss Elliott, yours truly,

"'CONSTANCE MEDLICOT CHICHESTER.

"'Ingleside, Birstwith, near Ripley.'

"A hundred a year, and with Mr. Chichester's

mother! O Will, Will!" and in her fulness of joy Dym gave him a great hug, which made him wince with pain. Not a trace of it was suffered to appear in his face though, as he took off his spectacles and proudly surveyed his sister.

"A noble sum—and at eighteen too! Why, Dym, your fortune's made. Latimer Chichester has been your fairy godmother."

"And to think he had it in his pocket all the time he was so disagreeable! Will, do you think that is what really took him away?"

"I should not wonder."

"What, all the way to the North, and for me?"

"Very likely; but I should advise you not to speculate on probabilities. How about being a daily governess now, Dym?"

Dym contemplated him ruefully, and then her face clouded.

"Well, little one, what now?"

"O Will, I forgot it was so far away."

"Due north and south—Yorkshire and Kentish Town; but never mind that."

"Ah, but I do mind. O Will, if you could only live there too—in the Happy Valley, as Edith calls it?"

"My dear, I am cut out for London work; no inglorious ease, no rose-covered vicarage for me. The grapes are sour, Dimples."

"It would just suit you," drawing a long sigh. "Oh, you dear, patient boy, how am I to leave you?"

Will patted her cheek indulgently, with a hand

that was too white and thin, and smiled a little sadly when Dym pulled it down and kissed it in her girlish reverence.

"You glorious old Conqueror!"

"You silly child, you mean. Come, Dym, this is not the way to sing your *Te Deum.*"

"I have not forgotten it," returned Dym, very sweetly. "Why is it one always feels good when one is happy?"

"Because happiness is intended to be our normal state, I suppose, and 'we carry this consciousness about with us as a remnant of our lost Paradise,' as some one says; and as a sign and seal of our future one," he continued, almost in a whisper, but Dym heard him.

Will rarely talked his religion, even to his sister. He broke off now to remind her it was late; so Dym went off to her room, and dreamt the pleasant dreams of youth, and Will sat far into the night, till he waxed drowsy over his work.

Dym was sitting at work the next day, the floor was strewn with the pretty rose-coloured breadths of a new dress she had just bought for herself, when Mr. Chichester walked quietly in and sat down beside her.

A moment afterwards he had taken up one of the breadths, and was examining it critically.

"Very pretty. What do you call this—grogram?"

"O Mr. Chichester, as though you did not know better than that!" laughed Dym; "grog-

ram—who ever heard of such a stuff nowadays?"

"Is it out of fashion, then? I should think Pamela, or Clarissa Harlowe, or one of Sir Charles Grandison's ladies must have worn grogram. I suppose now you call this general flimsiness muslin. I knew an old gentleman, a friend of my mother's, who always classed all materials for ladies' dresses under the one head—'grogram.' Well, what do all these preparations portend?"

"Guess," was the laughing answer.

Dym looked very fresh and bright this afternoon, and she did not feel a bit afraid of Mr. Chichester. What a beautifier happiness is! Even that severe critic Guy Chichester was obliged to allow, as he looked at her, that there was something very attractive about Miss Elliott. "Guess," Dym had said, with the display of dimples that had won for her her brother's pet name. Mr. Chichester could not forbear a smile.

"As though I have not guessed long ago. It means, of course, that you have accepted my mother's invitation."

Dym nodded blithely.

"Indeed I have. O Mr. Chichester, a hundred a year!" And her look added as plainly as a look could, "How delightful!"

"Does a hundred a year represent happiness to you, Miss Elliott?" a little sadly.

"No; but it offers independence, relief from

worry, my own honest maintenance, and a chance of saving."

"What! all that for a hundred a year?" incredulously.

"Of course; but, Mr. Chichester," dropping her voice and speaking very earnestly, "do you really think I am worth so much?"

"Now, Miss Telemachus, how am I to answer that question?" Dym blushed and laughed again.

"I wont have you quote that against me," she said seriously; "it is quite right for me to ask you this, because your mother says I am to consult you about it."

"Leaves it to me, does she? Mistaken woman! Suppose, Miss Elliott, we say two hundred then," with a merry twinkle.

"Mr. Chichester, I did think you were going to help me," somewhat reproachfully.

"Help you! Of course I will; as regards this, it seems my mother names her own terms. I can only advise you to close with them as quickly as possible."

"There is my answer," returned Dym promptly, handing him the letter.

"Fastened up securely! I am not to read it, then?"

"Of course not; it is all right. Will has looked over it."

"Has he? Well, and what does Will Clericus say—about the whole thing I mean?"

"He is so pleased—so grateful about it all; he never expected me to do half so well, I be-

lieve; he calls you my fairy godmother, Mr. Chichester."

Mr. Chichester threw back his head and laughed. "Well done, Will Clericus. Why, that is better than dubbing myself Mentor. I can't promise you a pumpkin chariot to convey you to Ingleside, Miss Elliott; but perhaps I might manage to meet you at the station with my bays."

"Do you think that will be necessary? You must remember I am going to be your mother's companion," said Dym bravely, with the sweet honesty which came so naturally to her.

Mr. Chichester's kindly liking for the lonely girl positively deepened into something like respect at this.

"Now I shouldn't have thought you capable of such a speech," he retorted bluntly. "Never mind what I mean by that; I am given to speak in hieroglyphics. It is the fashion at Ingleside to fetch all our friends from the station. I suppose, though you are my mother's companion, you will allow me, if only for your brother's sake, to include you in that category?"

Dym gave him a grateful look.

"One thing," he went on with the same kind seriousness, "I want to warn you against speculating too much on your chances of happiness with us—castles in the air are apt to dissolve in a blue mist; even the Happy Valley has its drawback. We have no perfect paradises here unfortunately, so my advice to you, Miss Elliott, is, take everything as it comes, and make the best of it; why, even my mother, though she is the

dearest mother in the world, may disappoint you sometimes."

"But she is kind, is she not?" asked Dym, rather timidly. She had conjured up in her imagination a very stately old-fashioned dame, very much like Guy himself, only somewhat oracular in speech, and she did not wish her illusion to be dispelled.

"Kind! my mother is goodness itself; but you must not cross her pet hobbies if Ingleside is to be the paradise you paint it."

"What are they? Don't you think it might be as well to know them beforehand?" asked Dym rather anxiously.

"Oh, you want to know how to steer, do you? What a crafty little person you must be! Well, I advise you to beware of Scylla and Charybdis. Whatever your secret opinion may be about that worthy divine, never say anything against Jeremy Taylor, and always look edified when my mother quotes him—that is Scylla, rock number one; now for the whirlpool Charybdis—never praise Miss Nethecote?"

"Jeremy Taylor! Why, I have never read him, or Thomas à Kempis either," cried Dym, in despair. "And who is Miss Nethecote?"

"A lady you will often see," returned Mr. Chichester briefly, and stroking his beard. Probably he repented of this bit of confidence, for he frowned somewhat, and changed the subject.

"Did my mother mention any special duties that you were to undertake, Miss Elliott?"

"Yes; but they sounded too pleasant to be

called duties. I am to read to her, and carry on her correspondence, and to help her with her fancy-work——"

"And wash the poodle, eh? By the way, my mother hates dogs, and I fill the house with them. Dutiful, isn't it? Miss Elliott, you talk lightly of your duties—'where ignorance is bliss,' you know. You have no idea of the onerous task that lies before. A hundred a year is buying you cheaply; you will be a sort of white slave in Ingleside. Do you know, my mother is a prodigious reader, only hitherto she has always read to herself. This is a new whim, having some one to read to her."

"I shall like it above all things," maintained Dym stoutly; "teaching Edith was hard work compared to this."

"Wait till you have tried," with a comical glance. "How will you like reading by method, I wonder—the *Times* and theology in the morning, biography and travels in the afternoon, and works of fiction in the evening? Beware of making a false computation of time, Miss Elliott. To read any other than *Paley's Evidences* before eleven, or to touch *Letters from Zanzibar* before noon, would be a grievous offence in my mother's eyes. I don't believe she could enjoy the richest humour of Dickens till the lamps were lit. I found her making a night of it once over *David Copperfield.* I remember well she twice sent her maid upstairs to fetch her a pocket-handkerchief, when Dorothy ought to have brought her a nightcap instead."

"You wont frighten me, Mr. Chichester."

"No, I believe you are invulnerable this afternoon. My mother is rather fond of a Johnsonian style of correspondence. But do you round your periods well, and dot all your i's?"

"Will says I never do," was the laughing response.

Mr. Chichester shook his head gravely.

"I am only warning. Never mind, I have discharged my conscience, and now abandon you to your own steering. Seriously, did my mother really write you a kind letter, Miss Elliott?"

"Oh yes, it was very, very kind; and indeed, Mr. Chichester, at the risk of driving you away, I must say thank you for all this."

"Well, say it, and be done with it," rather gruffly. Then after a moment's silence that frightened Dym, "It was curious, wasn't it, that my mother should have been looking out for some one of the kind?"

"Very strange."

"Why, I expected to have a vast amount of trouble in persuading her to try you; instead of which, she thanked me with tears in her eyes for proposing it. If she did not look just as well and cheerful as usual, I should have been quite uneasy; as it was, I was rather taken aback by her ready consent. She did not say anything to you in her letter about getting old, or any nonsense of that sort, did she?" turning on her abruptly.

"No," returned Dym, hesitating; she must be very careful how she guarded Mrs. Chichester's

confidence. "She spoke very kindly about Will."

"Ah, you are in clover there. You may talk all day about St. Luke's to my mother, and she would never be weary of it. Clergymen are her pet hobby. Pity we can't have your brother down there," with a dissatisfied shrug.

"Haven't you a nice vicar?" asked Dym, pleased with these snatches of confidence.

"Humph! my mother likes him, though I notice she never says anything about his sermons. Mr. Fortescue—he is a relative too, you see; Cousin Latimer we call him—has one fault; he can't forget he is a Fortescue, and unfortunately his wife cannot forget it either, or that she was a baronet's daughter. It is such a pity; the vicarage vies with the great house in setting the fashion in Birstwith, only don't tell my mother so, please."

"Why?" in a tone of much amusement.

"Miss Elliott, do you always ask so many questions? I think 'come and see' shall be my stock answer. Please to recollect my mother is a sort of female Louis Quatorze in all matters of form and etiquette, and that the Trevors, and Miss Nethecote, and even my high and mighty Cousin Katherine herself are only satellites of her court. But a truce to our idle gossip. You are neglecting your work shamefully, Miss Elliott; and here comes Will Clericus."

Will had plenty to say to his friend; and they instantly plunged into St. Luke's and parish matters. And it was not till the end of the

evening that Dym's private affairs came on the tapis again.

"We have settled everything except the time, I believe," observed Dym's fairy godmother.

Will looked up quickly, and then sighed.

"You mean when I am to lose Dym. When do you think it will be convenient to Mrs. Chichester to receive her?"

"To-morrow."

"O Will!" with an appealing look at him.

"Better let me go home first and deliver the letter, or shall I post it?" looking coolly at Dym's frightened face.

"You will have to reconcile yourself to Peter and the bays."

"Shall we say next week, Latimer—pooh, I mean Chichester?"

"Right. That will suit all parties. Well, Elliott, it is good-bye to St. Luke's."

"Do you mean you are not coming back for a long time?"

"That depends on my moods and tenses, and on certain—yes, on certain other circumstances; besides, for the present I am going to try how idleness agrees with me."

"You have tried it once too often, by your own account. I only judge you from your own words. Why not travel?"

"A pretty thing to say to a man who has been bored at the Pyramids, yawned over the Prophet's tomb, who has bartered temper and Russian furs together, and been fit to drown himself in the Falls of Niagara."

"Turn over a new leaf, then. Try farming."

"Oh, Nethecote does all that."

"Who is Nethecote?"

Dym, who had longed to ask the same question, almost clapped her hands. She listened, full of interest.

"Oh, he farms all the land for twelve miles round—mine, his own, and Harry Trevor's in the bargain; makes a good thing out of it, I should say. I remember the time when he was only under-bailiff. It shows what a man can do by industry and perseverance. Everything old Humphrey does turns to gold."

"Is he very old?" asked Dym curiously. She had forgotten, and was wondering almost again.

"Is he such a very 'aged, aged man,' you mean? What did I say, Miss Elliott? Come and see." And thus rebuked, Dym went back to her work in silence, and shortly afterwards the subject dropped altogether.

The next evening Dym heard that Mr. Chichester had been at the night-school, and had given the boys a supper; and the following day he came to wish them good-bye.

"Keep up a good heart, Elliott, when your sister is gone. We'll take care of her; and you've promised to come down and pay us a visit. My mother insists on it, remember." Then to Dym: "Good-bye, Miss Elliott; *au revoir*. When next we meet I hope you will have forgiven me for my harshness to Edith's governess."

"O Mr. Chichester, that was forgiven long ago."

"Very well; then you must promise me absolution beforehand for the very next offence I commit; look out for the bays on Thursday." And then he shook hands with them both and left the room; but Will followed him, and the two were walking up and down before Paradise Row for a long time. The street was noisy and full of children. Dym, from the window, saw Guy Chichester gently pick up a crying child and send it in to his mother; and once even, in the midst of what seemed to be an engrossing talk, he interfered between a knot of boys who were beginning a scuffle; and lastly, as a Sister of Mercy—rather a rare spectacle in that neighbourhood—came swiftly down the street in long black cloak and close bonnet, under which was a sweet, kindly young face, she saw Guy Chichester raise his hat and stand bareheaded till she had passed.

Dym had very few evenings with her brother, and the last came all too quickly, as last evenings will do, and the next morning Will took her to King's Cross himself, and put her in the second-class carriage.

"Well, good-bye, Dimples; take care of your little self."

"Oh, good-bye, my darling Will Conqueror," cried the little sister, sorrowfully.

"Don't fall to hero-worship too strongly, and as Chichester himself says, 'look out for breakers ahead.' There, God bless you, pet; you know how I shall miss you; and something husky came into Will's throat. Dym

could only cling about his neck crying; her heart was too full for speech.

"What a good face that young man has, and yet how painfully deformed he is!" said a young lady to her father, who was watching them from the platform, "and, papa, I do believe he is a clergyman too; how sorry the poor thing seems to be!"

"Ah, a sweetheart or sister I suppose; come, jump in, Minnie;" and Will, squeezing his sister's hand, drew back and let them pass him. Five minutes afterwards the train glided from the station, a handkerchief fluttered, hands waved, hats were lifted, the porters jostled past him, and William Elliott was left alone.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE VALLEY OF THE NIDD.

WHO has not heard of the Valley of the Nidd?

Visitors who resort to Harrogate, that gay queen of inland watering-places, are tolerably conversant with that fair tract of country, well watered as another Eden by the river Nidd, wherein lies this beautiful and picturesque valley.

Pateley Bridge, Nidderdale, Birstwith, Hampsthwaite, and Ripley all in their turn recall summer wanderings and pleasant days of excursion and holiday, and looking down over the rich extent of meadow and pasture, thickly sown with woods and plantations, one is driven to confess that this is the garden of the West Riding of Yorkshire. Down in a dip or hollow of the valley lies Birstwith, its postal town being Ripley, dropped down snugly on the banks of the Nidd, a tiny toy village or "story-book village," as some chance visitors termed it.

There is a pleasant Arcadian simplicity about Birstwith, all the same that there is a flavour of

monopoly about it. Though only twenty minutes by rail from Harrogate, and boasting a station of its own, the influx of visitors is rare; the only lodgings to be procured are just opposite the butcher's. "Not at home to strangers" is as plainly legible in the whole aspect of the village as though it were written up on a sign-board, and creaked noisily over the Railway Inn.

Not that there is any lack of hospitality among the Birstwithians; on the contrary, the curious stranger, though uninvited and his presence by no means solicited, is always made heartily welcome at the vicarage and the mill. The hospitality of the North is proverbial, nor is Birstwith one whit behind in this respect, though she guards her beauties coyly from undiscriminative eyes, and would fain hide herself from general observation. And a fairer English village never lay shrouded among the Yorkshire moors.

From the level platform of the station the view is singularly graceful and picturesque. The arch of the road leading to the village with the weir itself is indeed hidden, but the mill and the mill-house, with its blackened ruin standing amidst the trim garden, is the first object visible; then the church and the Great House, which, from its elevation, looks down over the entire village; houses sparsely scattered here and there gleam out in soft whiteness among the park-like meadows, the river Nidd flowing through them, now gliding on between its banks under a wealth of umbrageous foliage, now chafing over its

smooth white boulders, now twined into narrow curves, or forming dark cool pools, where the small red oxen come down to drink,—river and meadows and richly wooded banks going on alluringly for miles.

Dym, who was well tired by her journey and her long waiting at the bustling Harrogate station, trusted, from the slackening of the engine, that they were drawing to their journey's end, and could not help an audible sigh of disappointment when Hampsthwaite instead of Birstwith met her eye. Her sole fellow passenger, who had got in at Harrogate, put down his paper and smiled, and then, with a thorough Englishman's *mauvaise honte,* not being able to make up his mind to speak, took it up again.

Dym yawned and looked at him; he was a tall muscular-looking man, very tanned and freckled as though by constant exposure to sun and wind, with strongly developed homely features, and sandy—no, red hair, somewhat sun-dried too; he was dressed in a rough grey suit, and wore shooting-gaiters and a broad-brimmed straw hat, almost as broad as a planter's; his hands were large and freckled also; nevertheless Dym felt he was a gentleman.

But his face did not interest her, so she read the back of the paper instead. The *Pateley Bridge, Nidderdale, and Ripon Herald*—how dull it sounded after the *Daily Telegraph!* Dym could just catch sight of the right-hand advertisement—"The Braisty Woods Estate, in the

parish of Kirkby Malzeard"—what names! there's a worse one lower down—"Scriven-with-Tentergate;" who ever heard of such a place! and Dym read on: "Scriven-with-Tentergate. To be sold by auction, at the Commercial Hotel, Knaresborough, all that close of excellent grass land called Halfpenny Close, containing 1a. 2r. 0p."—whatever does that mean, I wonder!—"be the same more or less"—how enigmatical!—"situate in the township of Scriven-with-Tentergate, adjoining the Knaresborough and Boroughbridge Road," read on Dym perplexedly, till she was aware of a pair of light-hazel eyes peering at her over the top of the paper. Dym bit her lip and turned away. "May I offer you the paper?" volunteered the owner of the eyes in a voice not quite free from the northern dialect, and with a decided burr in it. Dym declined in rather a shamefaced manner, and then, curiosity getting the better of her timidity, "Are we far from Birstwith?" she asked, with difficulty suppressing another yawn. The gentleman smiled; he had a wide mouth, and when he smiled, he showed a row of strong white teeth, and the skin under his eyes puckered and wrinkled up; it was odd, but it was irresistible; it made Dym smile too.

"We shall be there in a very few minutes now," he observed. "We have just passed Hampsthwaite."

"Where the station-master had a wooden leg; yes, I know;" and then, in spite of her efforts to be very proper, Dym could not help putting another rather funny question—"Do all the

station-masters about here have only one leg or one arm?" for Dym's quick eyes had noted this singularity.

It was impossible to help laughing, which her new acquaintance did very heartily: it is astonishing how a laugh does away with all stiffness, even in a railway compartment where there are only two occupants.

"You have noticed this peculiarity at our three little stations, then: these disabled pensioners of the service are placed there because traffic is easy and work light. Our station-master at Birstwith has his full complement of legs and arms. You are passing through?" with an interrogative glance, not inquisitive but courteous.

"I am staying there; please let me know as soon as we are in sight of it," she added in a pleading voice.

"Which will be in a few minutes. Ah, I know now, you are the young lady from London whom Mrs. Chichester is expecting.'

"How do you know that?" turning on him sharply, and her manner said very plainly, "Who are you, I should like to know?"

"Every one knows every one else's business in Birstwith; that comes of living in a village. Now look out from your or my window; there's the mill."

"What a pretty garden, and water too! Oh, and what an ugly black ruin!"

"Marks of some recent fire; there now, you see the church—such a lovely church—and the

Great House, as we call it; Ingleside I mean. Now here we are at the station; let me help you out."

A fresh free wind blew round Dym as she alighted; the late beams of an August sun touched the level glories of meadows and rivers, and lit them up into radiance; the west was a mass of rose colour and purple clouds; from woods and meadows the birds sang lustily; the lowing of cattle came over the uplands. Dym stood on the high platform, a little doubtful and confused by the sudden beauty, while her travelling companion handed out plaid shawl, bonnet-box, and black bag.

"Halloa, Humphrey, playing ladies'-man, by way of change. Leave all that for Dyson, man. Here, Dyson, see after this lady's luggage, and send it up to Ingleside. Now, Miss Elliott, and how do you do?"

A moment before Dym was feeling strange and uneasy; now she seemed to be back at St. Luke's again, or even in the narrow close schoolroom at Lansdowne House. Guy Chichester's figure, in the old shooting-coat, looked so delightfully familiar, even amid its new surroundings, that her courage rose again. She put her hand in his, and declared, in answer to his inquiry, she was only a very, very little bit tired, albeit a few minutes since she had been yawning fearfully.

"That's well," he replied, with a glance of amity that made her foolish little heart beat more quickly. "You must have had a terribly

dull journey, though, all alone from King's Cross. Where did you put in an appearance, Humphrey?"

"Harrogate," was the laconic answer.

"Harrogate! Harry Trevor has come up by this train too, I see. Well, you may safely trust your goods and chattels to Dyson. Miss Elliott, will you come with me, please? Humphrey, I suppose I can't give you a lift?"

"Not exactly; Honor is waiting tea for me. Well, squire, good-night. Good-night, Miss—Miss——"

"Miss Elliott. What, haven't you exchanged cards yet? Permit me; Miss Elliott—Mr. Humphrey Nethecote, the worthiest and the most honest Yorkshireman in the whole of the West Riding;" and after this singular introduction, Mr. Chichester turned on his heel with a nod and "follow me" wave of the hand, and preceded them down the steep staircase, turning back to offer a hand to Dym, who was not quite so light-footed as usual.

"Been far, squire? The bays look heated."

"Only to Ripley and back. Took the waggonette, you see. What's the matter with the mare's foot, Peter—the off-side one?" And Mr. Chichester went anxiously round to see, returning a moment later with "all right," and bidding Dym jump in.

"Down, Kelpie, down."

"Kelpie—oh, I know. What a beautiful dog!" exclaimed Dym, as a large Scotch collie

dashed delightedly round Mr. Nethecote, and then slobbered, well pleased, over his hand.

"Kelpie knows his friends, Humphrey. His delight is a tacit reproach for not coming up oftener to Ingleside. Change your mind now, man, and throw over tea for a slice of our black mutton."

Mr. Nethecote shook his head. "What would Honor say?"

Mr. Chichester, who was drawing on his driving-gloves, merely shrugged his shoulders expressively. "Well, if you wont be persuaded, good-bye, and love to Honor. We will bring Miss Elliott to see her some day. Are you quite comfortable, Miss Elliott?" regarding her benevolently from his seat. "We will drive slowly through the village for your sake. You wont mind the mare being a little playful at starting. No matter how much I work her, she's always skittish, the jade—like the rest of her sex," Dym was sure she heard him add under his breath. "There, let go her head, Peter;" and the next minute they were clattering over the bridge, where Mr. Nethecote, who was striding on, nearly tumbled over a perambulator and a baby, the two elder children being too much engaged in curtsying to the squire to wheel it out of the way.

Dym uttered a little cry of admiration as they passed the mouth of the weir. Some boys were splashing bare-legged among the boulders; the water had a silvery gleam and flash; the trees on

either side drooped their dark branches into the stream; under the bridge there was a strand of pebbles; the mill-wheel whirred noisily.

"They are late at work to-night," she heard Mr. Chichester say to Peter.

Past two shady-looking houses, with a drinking-pump beside them; past a long stretch of level grass-land, so evenly kept and so well planted with trees, that Dym thought it must be the park belonging to the Great House, till she found out her mistake afterwards; past the almshouses, with the monumental inscription in the centre of the garden; past the post-office, the tailor's, and one or two other shops; then came the vicarage, a low grey house, set prettily in its own grounds, and looking on to the church, which stood high, and had to be gained by formidable tiers of steps; round a sharp corner and past another grey house; then the lodge gates, and a long, but not very wide sweep of carriage road leading to the great house itself. But Dym noticed they had been ascending ever since they had left the mill; this elevation gave her a glorious view over the country.

In Dym's eyes Ingleside was a very imposing residence. A large, white, irregularly built house with innumerable windows, each commanding separate views of interest, surrounded by large sloping gardens, laid out tastefully in flower parterres and terraces, and with walled-in kitchen gardens, whereof Dym caught sunny glimpses.

"*Voilà* Ingleside. Welcome the coming, speed

the parting guest—that's our motto, Miss Elliott. Take care of the wheel; let me help you down," coming round to her assistance. "Where's my mother?" he inquired of the grey-haired butler, to whom the sound of wheels had advertised their arrival.

"In the drawing-room. Dinner is ready, squire."

"Not served, I hope. Miss Elliott, you will not be able to change your toilette to-night. Tired, eh?" with one of those abrupt surveys that were natural to Mr. Chichester.

"No," replied Dym, almost inaudibly; but she did not volunteer the statement that she felt very nervous. She followed Mr. Chichester keeping very closely in his shadow, as they passed through the large pleasant hall, prettily inlaid with tesselated pavement, and then into a side corridor, with a painted window and a conservatory, where Dym got a delicious glimpse of cool green ferns, and heard the bubble of a fountain; then a door was flung open, a sweet soft perfume as of roses suddenly pervaded the air, and then Dym found herself in a large low room, with narrow windows opening on to the lawn, and full of old-fashioned chintz couches and settees. A tall beautiful-faced woman, looking in her brocade and lace ruffles as though she had just stepped out from a picture-frame, came forward to meet them.

"Mother, I have brought Miss Elliott after all. I told you I should be back from Ripley in time to meet the train."

Dym was taken by the hand, and kindly scrutinized.

"You are very welcome, my dear;" then the tone relaxing from its slight formality with excessive surprise. "How very young you are, Miss Elliott! Why, Guy, this is hardly more than a child." Mr. Chichester laughed. "Why, indeed, mother, I believe Miss Elliott has attained the sober age of eighteen," he began; but Dym, who by reason of her frequent failures had been taught to consider her youth as a fault, broke out here a little pitifully—

"Please don't say I am too young," she said, addressing Mrs. Chichester; "I shall get older soon. They all tell me that, and then I lose heart about things; but, indeed, I do mean to try my best to please you:" and as Dym ended her little speech, faltering and blushing and looking ready to cry, she found a motherly kiss imprinted on her cheek, and herself placed on a corner of the couch with kindly peremptoriness.

"That's right, mother; she looks terribly tired. I believe Miles is just going to sound the gong for dinner. Miss Elliott, you have had the dust and fatigue of a long journey. Ingleside is Liberty Hall—we have no rules of the Medes and Persians here. My mother will let you do just as you like. Will you come down to dinner with us, or have a cup of tea in your own room?"

"Oh, a cup of tea, please," gasped out Dym. It was all so strange and grand, and Dym felt so travel-soiled beside Mrs. Chichester's silvery

brocade, a little rest and quiet would be refreshing; it was so thoughtful of Mr. Chichester to propose it.

"Shall I ring for Dorothy, mother?"

"No, Guy, thank you. I will show Miss Elliott to her room myself. Come, my dear, come;" and Dym was thankful to obey.

"I thought you would prefer a small room next to me rather than a large one in the next wing," observed Mrs. Chichester, as they went up the low broad stairs together.

Dym, who was admiring the polished oak and the antique carving of the balustrades, said gratefully, "Oh, yes, thank you."

"It is the Grey Room. We call all our rooms after the colour of the paper and hangings—mine is the Blue Room, and my son's, which is opposite, the Red Room. This is yours, Miss Elliott."

Dym remembered her garret and throne of boxes at Lansdowne House, and the little glimpse of the green park seen over the roofs of houses. The Grey Room was small, but its two windows commanded an enchanting prospect of the garden, church, and meadows, with silvery flashes of the Nidd sparkling through the trees. Dym's brief survey took in an easy-chair, a reading-table with a bowl of roses on it, and a little bed, all grey and rose pink; and then Cinderella gave a long-drawn sigh of pleasure.

"How nice and pretty! too pretty for me, is it not? I have never had such a room in my life before."

Mrs. Chichester smiled benignantly at the girl's frankness.

"I hope you will enjoy many pleasant dreams in it, my dear. Ah, there's the gong, and I must not keep my son waiting. You shall have some tea, and when you are rested, Dorothy shall help you to unpack and arrange your things. Remember, you are to make yourself quite at home."

Dym's first thought when she was left alone was if only Will could see her, and the next a feeling of wonderment that this should be Mrs. Tressilian's sister.

Mrs. Tressilian was very kind and motherly, but "how unlike," soliloquized Dym, as she recalled the fair lymphatic face and somewhat obese proportions of that lady.

Mrs. Chichester was tall and somewhat full in person, but she carried herself as erect as a girl. Her complexion had retained its delicate colouring of youth, and the large soft white curls were just suited to her peculiar style of beauty. She had evidently been a belle in her youth, and still gloried innocently in that fact. Dym thought she had never seen a statelier gentlewoman. She told Mr. Chichester afterwards that she admired his mother's quaint old-fashioned way of dressing herself. "It is so picturesque, and so out of the common," she said.

"Ah, we've got to grogram at last," he returned, smiling. "None of your flimsy material, your fly-catching sort of dresses, for my mother.

If Jeremy Taylor had drawn up sumptuary laws, ordering 'that ye habits of ye gentlewomen be always silken or of clothe of velvet or brocaded tissues,' my mother could not have worn those fabrics more obediently. Have you noticed what a beautiful hand she has, Miss Elliott, and how she always wears lace ruffles to set it off? You have not an ugly hand yourself, by the way—why not try what real Valenciennes will do for you? Isn't my mother a regular female Louis Quatorze?"

A very neat-handed Phyllis, evidently a village maiden, brought up Dym's tea. It turned out her name was Phyllis, and that she was especially bidden to wait on the new companion. Dym liked her rosy cheeks and rustic manners exceedingly. She found out afterwards she was the miller's daughter, and being a *protégée* of Mrs. Chichester's, had been taken to serve at the Great House. "There being so mauy of us, miss, and the mill-house being hardly big enough for the whole of us."

Dym was delighted with Phyllis, but she stood greatly in awe of Mistress Dorothy. Dorothy wore a black silk, which was fresher than Dym's very best company dress; she had grey curls, pinned up in imitation of Mrs. Chichester, and a sober, somewhat hard-featured face. Dym would willingly have declined her assistance if she dared, but eighteen is not prolific in moral courage. Dorothy's attentions were terrifying, but they were scarcely to be set aside.

Dym's cheeks burned as her one box was unpacked, and her poor little dresses laid out on the bed one by one by Dorothy's skilful hands. What would Mrs. Chichester's grand maid think of their scanty number, and of all her little contrivances; the few laces she had picked to pieces, and washed and ironed herself; the collars she had stitched; her little stock of ribbon and finery; the one simple straw bonnet, with its fresh trimmings, which, with her old brown hat, was all Dym could boast?

Dym's heart need not have throbbed so in its girlish pride and wounded vanity. If Dorothy had a hard-featured face, she had a warm heart. Her quick eyes certainly detected the poverty, but it only moved her to kindly pity for the young stranger.

"Miss Beatrix doesn't fit her dresses better," she observed, during the confidential period when she was brushing out her mistress's hair.

The new inmate at Ingleside was sleeping peacefully when Mrs. Chichester and her maid were discussing her with the kindly curiosity and discrimination natural to women. "And then everything so neat, too. She can work lace rarely, I see; and her cuffs and collars were of such a beautiful colour! One always knows when one touches a lady's things; a lady's a lady, be she ever so poor."

I think it would have been a salve to Dym's pride if she had heard Dorothy.

Mrs. Chichester did not come up again, but she sent a message by Phyllis, hoping that

Miss Elliott had all she wanted, and that she would recommend her to seek her bed early.

Dym did not do this, but sat up instead writing a letter to Will, which drowsiness did not permit her to finish. She had only laid her head on her lavender-scented pillow, when she smelt the fragrance of a cigar under her window, and heard Guy Chichester's step on the gravelled terrace below. A moment after he called to his dog, and Dym was sure she could hear them both scrunching through the shrubbery; and so still was the night, that the clang of the iron gate nearly a quarter of a mile off was distinctly audible.

"Going out for a walk. Why, it must be eleven o'clock. How strange!" thought Dym drowsily; and then she fell asleep.

It was late the next morning—nearly nine o'clock—when Phyllis woke her. Dym jumped up in a fright.

Mrs. Chichester said you were not to be disturbed earlier, miss," observed her little handmaiden.

But Dym was not to be convinced, and dressed herself in a hurry.

She turned the handles of several doors—the dining-room, billiard-room, and lastly Mr. Chichester's library—before she discovered the morning-room, or Green Room as it was phrased, where she found Mrs. Chichester sitting alone knitting, while a substantial meal, evidently untouched, lay on the table.

"Good morning, my dear."

"Good-morning—but oh, Mrs. Chichester, have I kept you waiting?"

"Breakfast never waits for any one at Ingleside," was the somewhat dignified response. "It was my own choice to keep you company this morning, instead of breakfasting alone. Dorothy always brings me a cup of tea in my room. Sometimes, though not often, I wait for Guy."

"Indeed! Is he so late? I thought I heard him go out last night," was Dym's thoughtless answer.

Mrs. Chichester, who was moving to the table, looked a little surprised that her son's movements had been observed.

"Yes, he very often gives Kelpie a run. Then he is a great reader, and almost always sits up at night when he is at home. My son rarely breakfasts with us. But it strikes me I have forgotten my first duty as a hostess. I hope you have slept well, Miss Elliott."

"Very well, thank you," replied Dym.

And then, as though in flat contradiction of his mother's words, Mr. Chichester walked into the room.

"What, Guy, up already!"

"Down, I suppose you mean. Good-morning, mother," kissing her; "good morning, Miss Elliott. Well, have you slept off your fatigue yet?"

"Oh, yes," observed Dym joyously.

The prospect of her *tête-à-tête* meal with Mrs. Chichester had appeared rather formidable. In spite of his abruptness and occasional sarcasm,

she was beginning to look upon Mr. Chichester as an old acquaintance, and to feel more at home when he was present. She still stood in awe of him, it was true; but in his genial moods he could put her at her ease with him, and his face and voice always recalled St. Luke's. She had a notion that he could be very formidable too on occasions; but on this first morning the squire looked as smooth as his own beard; under some circumstances that could be rough also.

"I'll be bound you have written to Will Clericus already. Look at her, mother; she begins to redden already like a culprit."

"I did that last night; but I have not finished my letter; I got so sleepy," stammered Dym.

"Serves you right. Couldn't he wait another day? I telegraphed to him that you had arrived safely."

"Did you, Mr. Chichester? How very kind!"

"I suppose I was in one of my amiable moods last night. It will prevent anxiety in No. 3, Paradise Row. Did you see there was another horrible collision on the Great Northern, mother —eight killed and seventeen injured?"

"No, Guy, I have not read it," a little quietly. "I think, if Miss Elliott be not too tired, after breakfast I will get her to give me the particulars."

"What, before Jeremy Taylor, mother?"

And the twinkle of his eyes said plainly, "Your work is beginning already, you see." But

Mrs. Chichester, as though her son's joke did not quite please her, changed the subject altogether.

Mrs. Chichester spent her mornings in a large upper room looking over the porch, and leading out of the Blue Chamber. It was called her dressing-room; but there were no other evidences of her toilette than were contained in the heavy japanned boxes where, years afterwards, Dym found relics and hoards of fine cobweb lace, an Oriental chain of pearls, and other old heirlooms.

The room was pleasant, and had a delightful view from one of the windows, beside which was an old high-backed chair of carved oak, and a table covered profusely with books and works. At this table Dym found herself ensconced shortly after breakfast, but the *Times* as yet had not been taken up.

"Do not read just yet; I want to talk to you. It seems to me that we ought to know each other a little," Mrs. Chichester had observed, with a peremptory graciousness which had driven the girl into shamefaced silence.

Already Dym had discovered she was a little afraid of Mrs. Chichester, in spite of her beauty and goodness. Dym was quite sure, from her son's account, that she was very good.

"We ought to know each other a little better—don't you think so? My son and I both hope you will be happy here, Miss Elliott."

Dym hoped so too with all her heart, but she assented only briefly.

"My son has taken a great interest in St.

Luke's and in your brother. Guy exaggerates a little in his descriptions, but he will have it that your brother is little short of a saint."

"There is no one like Will," said Dym; but the tears sprang to her eyes. In mentioning St. Luke's Mrs. Chichester had effectually broken the ice.

"Yes, Mr. Elliott seems a thorough clergyman. What a pity he is in such poor health! We must have him down here, and see what Yorkshire air will do for him."

"Oh, thank you!" cried Dym gratefully. She was quite touched by this unexpected kindness. She gave Mrs. Chichester a moving little account of Will's long illness and heroism, and self-denying labours in the parish. "The poorer a person is, the better Will seems to like him. He will have it," finished the little sister, "that a sick person ought to excite our reverence rather than our compassion. He quotes that from his favourite saint, St. Francis de Sales."

"St. Louis of France used to tend the sick on his knees, with uncovered head. I like these notions," moralized the elder lady. "These sentiments of respect are not common among young people nowadays. As Guy says, the old chivalry of religion is fast dying out. I daresay," speaking hesitatingly, as though doubtful of her own prudence—"I daresay Mr. Elliott somewhat wondered at my son's sudden devotion to St. Luke's."

"I think Will was rather perplexed at first," said Dym honestly.

"And afterwards? I hope you do not think me curious; but Guy is so unlike other men, that I cannot help wondering what people think of his sudden flights and fancies."

Here was a dilemma; but Dym met it sturdily.

"Will said it was a whim evidently that brought Mr. Chichester to St. Luke's; but he was glad of his help nevertheless, and they got on very well together. I don't think Mr. Chichester said much about himself in all these weeks, and it was only a guess of Will's that it was all excitement and restlessness that drove him to the work. I think he got it into his head that Mr. Chichester was not quite happy."

Dym was hardly wise in her excessive candour; for though Mrs. Chichester had evidently got the answer she expected, an expression of pain crossed her face; she took up some work, sighed, and laid it down again.

"There is no reason why my son should not be happy," she returned, rather proudly, as though something in Dym's speech offended her. "Few men are blessed with more advantages, I suppose," speaking to herself, "spoilt children are always more or less capricious, and cry for the moon. The cleverer a man is, the more numerous his idiosyncrasies—don't you think so, Miss Elliott? I daresay even your brother has his whims."

Dym, who felt she had touched on delicate ground, and was justly rebuked, said, "Yes;" and then trusted the subject would be changed.

Dym had not been four-and-twenty hours in

the house, yet already instinctively she felt that there would be danger in claiming any prior intimacy with Mr. Chichester, or in betraying familiarity with his pet hobbies. With all Mrs. Chichester's gentleness, there was a standoffishness and a tone of monopoly in all that concerned her son. He was evidently the object of her intense idolatry; but before many days were over Dym argued shrewdly that she guarded her mother's prerogative a little too jealously.

Her devotion to him was unselfish, but it lacked one element to insure perfection. Mrs. Chichester loved her son, and her affection was most warmly reciprocated; but she did not thoroughly understand him; in some moods she was even a little afraid of him.

Mother's love is not always exempt from this fear; some women glory in it. The oft-repeated story of the hen who rears a duckling, and then sees her nursling take to the unknown element, is true of many a mother. The young divinity she has worshipped from his infancy suddenly breaks loose from his swaddling-bands, abandons the leading-rein, puts aside the fond hand that restrained him, and breaks out into devious ways, or carves out new paths for himself away from the old landmarks. One can imagine the mother stretching out her hands across that unknown territory, and praying him to return. Perchance the wind carries back some light mocking answer. Where is the child she has known? A few of these foolish hearts go on burning their candles and kneeling before their empty shrines.

The wiser among them trim their household lamp, and make the hearth-fire burn cheerily. By-and-bye these young prodigals—these wanderers lost in their own mists—will come back, allured and cheered by the old lights, and condescend to be warmed by them.

"Faith as a grain of mustard seed." What mother is there who needs not to possess that?

Dym had made a wrong calculation in repeating her brother's words; Mrs. Chichester still harped upon it.

"I hope you will never hint such a thing to any one else—your brother's suspicion I mean," she went on this time rather appealingly. "My son deserves to be happy, if any one in this world ever does; he has excellent spirits—do not you think so, Miss Elliott?"

Dym eagerly answered that certainly Mr. Chichester had excellent spirits, and went on to add, with innocent hypocrisy, that no one ever made her laugh before.

Mrs. Chichester's brow cleared.

"His sallies of humour are so irresistible. Dear Guy! By-the-bye, Miss Elliott, I hope you have carefully guarded the confidence I reposed in you; I would not for worlds have my son's suspicions aroused."

This affronted Dym.

"I never betray confidence, Mrs. Chichester," she returned loftily; and her manner was so full of vexed dignity, that Mrs. Chichester could not forbear a smile: they were finding out each other's angles already.

"You do not know how quick Guy is; a word dropped carelessly—a look even—will tell him as much as a whole sentence. I only want to put you on your guard. Why, he even took alarm at my ready acquiescence with his wish to have you as my companion."

"Yes, he told me that," returned Dym, half mollified; "he seemed to have anticipated some difficulty. Perhaps I ought to tell you, Mrs. Chichester, that he questioned me rather closely as to what was contained in your letter—if you had expressed yourself as failing, or anything of that sort."

"And you put him off the scent?"

"I tried, but I don't know whether I quite succeeded."

Mrs. Chichester sighed heavily, "Poor Guy!"

"Why do you distress yourself so, dear Mrs. Chichester?" cried the girl impulsively, moved at last to sincere sympathy. "I know you do not wish to alarm your son needlessly, but if you cannot spare him pain in the end——"

"There is plenty of time," was the desponding answer; "there is no need for him to share this long suspense beforehand. Remember, Miss Elliott, your lips are sealed on this subject till I unclose them."

"To him do you mean, or altogether? Perhaps," she went on, with a touch of womanliness quaint in one so young, "it may relieve you a little to talk out your fears to me;" then very sweetly, "My own dear mother was blind before she died, Mrs. Chichester."

Mrs. Chichester shuddered, and then held out her hand to her young comforter, as though touched, in spite of herself. Dym held it, and looked up anxiously in her eyes; they were large brown eyes, very beautiful in colour and expression, but in one of them Dym fancied she could see a touch of filminess.

"If mamma had lived," she went on, "the doctors would have cured her. I have heard all about it; you don't know how easy it is; it is hardly an operation at all, it is so very simple."

Mrs. Chichester shook her head. "You cannot couch a cataract till it is formed. I know I am very silly to dread it so; perhaps, after all, the dread will be removed long before I shall need courage, for you know, Miss Elliott, I may have years to wait before that time comes."

"Yes, I know," returned Dym softly; and then with a deep sigh Mrs. Chichester changed the subject.

CHAPTER IX.

WHO IS HONOR NETHECOTE?

DYM was very glad she had arrived at this happy understanding with Mrs. Chichester; for before luncheon was over Mr. Chichester gave her convincing proof that he already considered her as one of the family. She did not know that he had held weighty argument with his mother on this very subject.

"We must keep her in her place, Guy," Mrs. Chichester had said the night before Dym's arrival; "we must be kind to her of course, and make her feel herself at home, poor girl; but I don't think it will be for her ultimate happiness to lift her out of her proper position."

"What a painfully heavy remark, mother; addressed to me too. Who wants to lift Miss Elliott out of her place?"

"No; but, Guy, it is necessary we should arrive at some sort of understanding; it will prevent awkwardness, and perhaps disappointment in the end."

"Very well, mother; she is your companion, not mine—remember that."

"You put things in such a strange light,

Guy," returned Mrs. Chichester, "that there is no arguing with you. If Miss Elliott be my companion, I am afraid she is also in some sort your *protégée.* In her brother's house you could hardly help noticing her, and in some respects treating her as your equal."

"Is not a lady on terms of equality with any gentleman, mother?" demanded Guy, pointedly.

"My dear boy, I must entreat you not to get Quixotic. I am talking mere worldly wisdom to you now. Of course, if Miss Elliott be a sensible girl, as she must be, considering she is your hero's sister, she will soon see for herself that you hold a different position here from that you occupied in her brother's house; it would never do for any companion to be on terms of easy familiarity with the master of the house."

"Which means I am not to say a civil word, I suppose? Is that what you call being kind to her? O patronage, not frailty, thy name is woman."

"Guy, do not be absurd! I never knew one's own son could be so trying. Be civil by all means; but as you insist on having her at all our family meals when we are alone, I should think it would be well to be a little careful, especially for the first few days; for," finished Mrs. Chichester, with most praiseworthy solemnity, considering the incredulous smile on Guy's face, "I intend to begin as we are to go on."

"So do I," *sotte voce;* and then the squire stroked his beard and said, "Pish!" and "Pshaw!" rather audibly. "Have you quite done, mother?"

Mrs. Chichester rose and shook her head.

"O Guy, Guy, it is no use talking to you, I see then."

"A wilful man maun have his way," in broad Scotch, "I suppose you mean. How long have you learnt such wisdom, *mère chérie?*" And as proof that the argument was finished, the squire politely handed his mother to the door and rang for coffee.

And the next day, when Mrs. Chichester was giving orders to Dorothy to meet Miss Elliott in the pony-carriage, the squire coolly put his head in at the door and announced his intention of meeting the train himself.

Mrs. Chichester had sufficient tact not to remonstrate. Probably by this time she had learnt her lesson, and knew it would be useless.

But her delicate and subtle woman's instinct scented trouble afar. Miss Elliott was very, very young, and painfully unsophisticated; and Guy's *bonhomie* bordered on radicalism; and though she knew her son was fancy-proof, one was never safe with these young girls, she thought: they were always taking fancies in their head, and thinking themselves badly used.

Which shows, as Mrs. Chichester had never had a companion in her life before, that this lady was not devoid of the astute wisdom generally assigned to the mothers of families.

She had her idol and her golden pedestal all complete, but she wanted to fence it round with palings of conventionalities, for fear unhallowed footsteps might approach too near.

It was all waste time and labour, for Mr. Chichester knew very well what he was about; and being singularly without vanity, and as guileless in such things as a child, in spite of his shrewdness, was just the man who would do unwise things out of pure kindness.

He had his own notions how his *protégée* was to be treated at Ingleside, and these notions being somewhat nice and Quixotic, there was fear that, unless his mother achieved the happy medium with respect to Miss Elliott, he might run into the other extreme, and overdo the thing, to make up for her coldness.

And all the time his conscience would be perfectly clear; for in spite of his sarcasms he was very anxious to draw the right line between Miss Elliott and himself, and, if truth must be told, he hardly thought on the subject at all till his mother brought it up, his mind being full of other things.

Kindness and generosity were Guy Chichester's chief characteristics; unfortunately they were not always exercised with a due amount of prudence.

Herein lay the danger.

He was so kind to Dym, that Dym would have to learn for herself that he was kind to every one else.

And he was so used to be adored, that a little adoration, more or less, would hardly be noticed by him.

He met them at the dining-room door on the morning in question with a most reproachful face.

"Mother, where have you been? The gong has sounded just ten minutes—you will be late for the field. Miss Elliott not even dressed!"

Dym looked down abashed, feeling all of a sudden painfully conscious of her neat cambric, and doubtful in her own mind whether the sumptuary laws at Ingleside might not necessitate a fresh toilette for luncheon. Mrs. Chichester's next words dispelled this terrible fear.

"Nonsense, Guy; we have plenty of time; I am not dressed myself. Kate asked me to call for her about a quarter to three; there is not the slightest occasion for us to be on the field so early."

"I see, the whole court is to assemble at the vicarage gate and form into grand procession. I hear the Cheviots and Saunders are coming over from Harrogate, and the Harcourts from Knaresborough. I am glad you have stuck to the old *régime*—cold collation at seven instead of dinner."

"And mind you do not bring too many people, Guy," returned his mother warningly; "this room will not hold over twenty comfortably."

"If the numbers are overwhelming, we can draft them off to the vicarage. Kate likes a crowd. I went over there this morning; such a fuss she was making. She had even turned Latimer out of his study. If I were a husband I should hate to confess I were henpecked. There were his papers all huddled together, and the poor man driven to play cricket with his

boys in a shady corner of the field. There's one thing I admire about you, mother: you never make a fuss."

"Katherine is generally considered a good manager," returned Mrs. Chichester, by no means indifferent to this praise.

"Management ceases to be good when it is evolved with discomfort and noise," returned her son somewhat dogmatically. "Can't you send Dorothy down there to help?—all the maids were running about and looking so fagged. Kate will be telling everybody this afternoon that she is so done up, and can hardly stand. Such nonsense; and all forsooth because the London cousins are coming. How I do hate toadyism!"

"Guy, my dear," remonstrated Mrs. Chichester—her glance added, "we are not alone." But Guy, who was helping himself to pickles, coolly went on with his list of grievances.

"And there, in the midst of it, was little Grace Dunster, unpicking a dress of my lady's. I had up my lady, and talked to her seriously. I must own Kate had the grace to looked ashamed of herself."

"O Guy, when will you leave off meddling in other people's business? Fancy ordering off Kate's dressmaker!"

"She had no business to be working at the vicarage to-day, when the whole village has a general holiday; it is insubordination to the ruling powers. That's me!" striking his broad chest with his hand, and laughing at his

mother's horrified face. "Katherine plays the grey mare in her own domains. All your dark-eyed women are shrews." And Dym was sure that twinkle was meant for her. "But I got the better of her. I told her slavery was abolished in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and sent off poor Grace to help Honor, who was alone with the men in the field."

"Well, that was sensible, Guy; better than your drudging at it yourself, as you did last year."

"Yes; wasn't it? I was only on the field from ten to one. My argument with Katherine occurred just before the gong sounded."

Mrs. Chichester's "Oh, indeed!" did not sound so well pleased.

"I am glad you don't call three hours' labour in the hot sun drudgery; it has made me pretty hungry, though. Miss Elliott, if you will not have any more cold beef, I advise you to go and put on that pink muslin."

The squire was issuing his own orders; but Dym kept her place, and coloured distressfully, and her eyes asked him so plainly the reason of this mandate, that he laid down his knife and fork in surprise.

"What, have you not told her, mother? Miss Elliott goes with us, of course."

"Yes, of course," returned Mrs. Chichester. "I was only waiting till luncheon was over to tell Miss Elliott myself."

"Rather late in the day, is it not? Well,

they say 'it is never too late to mend.' All the same, I hope that pink muslin is ready." And disregarding his mother's disapproving looks, he rattled on, "You see this is a gala day at Birstwith, and we all put on our go-to-meeting clothes, as Dame Ford expresses it. Why, my mother has even ordered me to wear a blue frock-coat for the occasion."

"What occasion?" timidly asked Dym.

If she had only another cool summer dress to wear instead of that pink muslin! Poor Dym, she was keenly alive to the impropriety of which the squire had been guilty in betraying such an intimate knowledge of her resources. She could not well explain to Mrs. Chichester that he had come upon her in the midst of her dressmaking labours; but she was aware how strange it must sound in her motherly ears.

"What occasion is it?" she asked, feeling all of a sudden that not even the salt of kindness can make the bread of dependence perfectly sweet.

"Dear, dear, Miss Elliott, twenty-four hours at Ingleside, and not know that this is our annual flower-show—our great fête-day! Mother, what have you and Miss Elliott been doing with yourselves all the morning? I'll be bound St. Luke, and not St. Jeremy, is at the bottom of it all. If you once launch Miss Elliott on the subject of St. Luke's, you are lost. I think I shall lay Kentish Town and Will Clericus under an interdict."

"You had better go and get ready, my dear," interrupted Mrs. Chichester's gentle voice.

Dym, whose ears were tingling with the squire's benevolent jests, made her escape from the room, but not before she caught the words, "O Guy, Guy, you will spoil her!" spoken in a tone of remonstrance.

Dym had a feeling of uneasiness all the time she was dressing; even the crisp fresh folds of the renowned pink muslin, and the knowledge that it fitted exquisitely, and that she looked unusually well, failed to give her pleasure. Morbidly sensitive, she felt sure there was a jar somewhere. Her nervousness was not lessened when she found Dorothy's movements had been quicker than hers, and that Mrs. Chichester had been ready for some minutes, and was waiting in the porch. Dym's eyes took in an alarmed survey of pale-coloured satin and black-lace drapery as she came up flushed and rustling, and attempting to button her new grey gloves.

"There is no occasion for hurry; let me do that for you, that is if my clumsy fingers can manage it."

If the squire had done it on purpose, his politeness could not have provoked Dym more. She waxed hotter than ever as Mr. Chichester leisurely pulled at her glove; either the day was warm, or it was tighter than usual. Dym, who prided herself on her neat hand, and who could not afford many Paris kid gloves, looked on impatiently at the ruthless work of destruction.

"That will do. Ah! there, the seam has gone. Never mind, Mr. Chichester, please. I am keeping your mother waiting."

She half expected another dignified remonstrance from the porch.

"'Well enough is soon enough.'" When will you women learn that? How are you to go all the afternoon with your glove unbuttoned? There, it is achieved at last. Never mind the rent. We may pick holes in ourselves, not in other people," remarked the squire roguishly. "If you had stood still it would not have happened. There, run off."

Dym needed no second bidding. She barely waited to say "Thank you." She glanced very timidly at Mrs. Chichester as she walked erect and silent down the shrubberies. "If we reach that iron gate without a word," she thought, "I shall be safe; but at the same time I shall catch it."

And Dym was right.

"My dear," began Mrs. Chichester,—by-and-bye, when Dym knew her better she found out that Mrs. Chichester's voice was always the most gentle when a lecture was impending,—"my dear, I know it is very soon for me to speak, but I cannot help thinking the sooner the better, in this case: perhaps I may surprise you; but I do so wish to speak of your manner to my son."

If Mrs. Chichester had been perfectly just, she would have said, "of my son's manner to you." But Dym could be lectured where Guy would not brook a word.

"Madam!" interrupted Dym, blushing scarlet.

If Mrs. Chichester had not been quite so gentle, she would have seen a rare specimen of Dym's temper; but gentleness and courtesy disarm wrath.

"My dear, you are so very young, and you have no mother, you know," returned the elder lady deprecatingly. "You must not mind if I give you hints now and then. Your former intimacy with my son doubtless warrants a great deal of familiarity; but though you have not been many hours with us, you must see for yourself that——" Mrs. Chichester hesitated a little—"things are different, in short, from what they were in Kentish Town."

"Dym's only safety lay in silence; but what angry throbs there were under the pink dress! "I have not been here four-and-twenty hours, and in all that time I have not spoken a dozen words to Mr. Chichester; I have hardly looked at him," thought the girl, feeling injured and hurt in every fibre of her. Doubtless Mrs. Chichester was a little premature in her wisdom. Poor Dym was being made the scapegoat of the squire's transgression. Guy's luckless jokes, his journey to the station, the weight of that unfinished argument—all bore heavily on the innocent victim. But Dym was very young and terribly imprudent. Perhaps, after all, Mrs. Chichester was wise in trying to make her understand the position of things without delay.

"You must not be hurt with me, my dear," she went on; "I only speak for your good." (O

Mrs. Chichester, fie for shame! Was not somebody else's good plainly involved?) "Pray do not misunderstand me, I want you to be good friends with both of us, and to feel perfectly at home. But could you not infuse a little more respect in your manner to my son? Don't you think in your position, my dear, you might address him as 'Sir'? It would sound a little less abrupt—do you not think so?" her tone quite appealing in its gentleness.

"Certainly, if you wish it," answered Dym's proud young voice.

"Thank you, my dear, I should like it. You are very good to give in to an old woman's fancy. When you know me a little, you will not mind my finding fault with you now and then, will you? Elder people have their peculiarities, and how are we to expect perfection at eighteen? Now we will say no more about it, and try and enjoy our flower-show." And Mrs. Chichester took the hand and the torn grey glove so pleasantly in hers, and looked so motherly and benignant with her placid face and white curls, that Dym's fit of wrath evaporated; and though she felt anything but invigorated by the bracing tonic of Mrs. Chichester's reproofs, she was disposed to think that perhaps she was right, though the squire, and not she, had been to blame, and that it behoved her to be very careful for the future.

It is a singular fact in religion and morals, that with every good resolution there is a counter temptation. The seed and the birds of the air

do so fully illustrate this truth. When one's mind is most heavenly, fresh complications are sure to rise.

By the time they had reached the iron gate Dym was certainly in a heavenly frame of mind; that is, in that devout and subdued state wherein mistakes are lamented and improvement promised. She was a little low, perhaps, which is not heavenly, and disposed to sit down and cry for Will. She looked up at the open church door so longingly—for Birstwith church always stood open, so that the dwellers in the Happy Valley might literally go up to pray—that Mrs. Chichester, who felt sorry for the pain she had inflicted, proposed that Dym should look over the church while she went into the vicarage.

"I can give you a quarter of an hour, for we need not be on the field before then," she continued kindly. And Dym took the quarter of an hour quite gratefully, and thanked her as though it were a gift.

Life is made up of trifles. A hackneyed phrase, but how true it is!

Dym was sitting in the deep stone porch, to collect her thoughts before going into the church, when a loud view-halloo from below made her raise her eyes, and there was the squire vaulting over the chain, spikes and all, at the bottom of the steps, and coming up them rapidly.

"One good turn deserves another," he shouted.

"Have you a needle and thread, Miss Elliott? Look here, this comes of trying to clear a hedge in the plantations. Should have got off without

a scratch but for Kelpie—the brute got between my legs." And the squire held out his arm to show how the silk lining had been torn away from the cuff of the blue frock-coat. "If you can't do it, I will just run over to Burgess, the tailor; only he is sure to be on the field."

Dym produced her little huswife without a word, and Mr. Chichester sat down beside her on the cool stone bench.

"What a delicious view one has here, and how nice and cool it is!" baring his head gratefully to the breeze. "Those white tents show very prettily among the trees, don't they, Miss Elliott?"

"They are very pretty, sir," biting off her thread with a little snap at the end of the last word. Mr. Chichester turned round, and eyed her sharply. Perhaps Dym did not like her work being so closely overlooked, for she certainly blushed up.

"How hot you look! Or is it the radiating beams from that pink dress? You ought to wear white, Miss Elliott; and your gloves—how I have torn them!—don't match. Well, and how do you get on with my mother? Is she kind, eh?"

Dym broke her thread, and apologized.

"Why, you are almost as clumsy as I am. Who would have thought it—with those little fingers too! I think I prefer a large benevolent-looking hand to a dimpled one. You oughtn't to bite your thread, Miss Elliott; it puts many a

fee into the dentist's pocket. Well, you haven't answered my question."

"Mrs. Chichester is very kind, sir. I think —that is, I hope—we shall get on well together."

"I hope so too. There is a depressed tone of humility in your voice. What, breakers already! —temper *versus* philosophy. Well, if you are not more companionable to my mother than you are this afternoon—By the way, what makes you call me 'sir'?"

Dym did not snap her thread this time, but she sewed on as though her life depended on it. "Turn your wrist a little more to the left, please, Mr. Chichester. I am afraid I am keeping you waiting a long time."

"For my answer—yes. Is there anything the matter, that you are so tongue-tied this afternoon?" Oh, if that quizzical voice would only be still!

"Yes—that is—no, sir; there is nothing the matter," stammered Dym.

"Yes, sir—no, sir. Are you metamorphosed into a schoolboy, Miss Elliott? I tell you flatly I wont have it."

No answer; only a rebellious little smile at one corner of Dym's mouth.

"This is some of my mother's doings. Ha, ha! I scent grogram. Come, Miss Elliott, confess; honour bright." Here he stopped, bit his lip angrily, and a dull red came into his forehead. "Pshaw, I did not mean that.

Confess now, Miss Elliott, isn't my mother at the bottom of this?"

"She wishes it—that is—I think it only right, sir, considering my position."

"Don't I tell you I wont have it?" rather roughly. "You women make droll mistakes. I should have thought my mother's companion was a lady, and to be treated as one. Why don't you curtsy to me, Miss Elliott, as the village children do; or call me Sir Squire, as many of the country bumpkins do when they address me? There, I hope I have heard the last of such nonsense."

"But, Mr. Chichester, you forget that your mother's wishes are my law." Dym's mood was getting less heavenly; she wanted to argue it out.

But she soon found out who was master at Ingleside.

"Oh, you are obstinate, are you? There is only one way of treating such cases. As I don't choose William Elliott's sister to address me in this manner, I shall never answer when you call me 'sir,' and if you persist in such folly, I shall drop conversation altogether;" and Dym, whose work was ended, and who was sitting with folded hands, actually saw a flash in Guy Chichester's eyes.

"But your mother?" she faltered, as he rose and took up his hat.

"Leave my mother to me, please." Perhaps he repented of the fierceness, for he broke into a smile directly afterwards, and Guy Chichester's

smile was very sunny. "Well, thank you for your neat handiwork, Miss Elliott. Now I think we had better be going."

As he was evidently waiting for her, Dym obeyed, though with some trepidation; but, as she phrased it afterwards, her ill luck was in the ascendant. Just as Mr. Chichester was unfastening the chain at the bottom of the steps a bevy of people came out of the vicarage gate. In another minute they were in the midst of them.

"Well, squire, we are only waiting for you."

"Guy, what were you doing in the church porch?"

Guy turned to his shy companion with a droll mixture of fun and gravity. "See what it is to be a person of importance, Miss Elliott. Was it not the great Julius Cæsar who said, 'It is better to be first in a village than second in Rome?' I suppose you don't know the happiness of having all your actions canvassed. How do you do, Lady Marsden? Miss Patty, this is your first visit to Birstwith, I believe. Mrs. Trevor, your humble servant. My dear mother, for fear you die of curiosity, which occurrence will assuredly damp the fête, I will explain that, having torn the silk lining of my coat-sleeve, and seeing Miss Elliott in the porch, I made my way to her, having a curious sort of fancy that women and needles and thread are synonymous terms—hence the result."

"O Mr. Chichester, you are always so droll," laughed Miss Patty.

Dym timidly made her way to Mrs. Chichester, and was rewarded for her effort by being welcomed with a benign smile, and kindly introduced to the vicar and his wife.

"This is my new companion, Kate. Latimer, this is Miss Elliott—the young lady I spoke to you about."

They both bowed, but Mrs. Fortescue looked at her curiously.

"Rather a young companion, is she not, Aunt Constance?" with a smile meant to be winning, but Dym thought there was something peculiar in her tone. Dym had plenty of graphic power; she reproduced the whole of the group afterwards for Will's benefit, adding droll little touches of her own. Will, as he read her description, felt as though he could see it all exactly. The grey vicarage, covered with climbing roses; the church, and the long green meadow, touched with sunlight and dotted with white tents; the vicar, standing tall and slim, with long fair beard, and just a touch of Puseyism in the cut of his coat, "looking very clerical, very proper, and just as a Latimer Fortescue ought to look," put in Dym, with one of her sly hits. "One could imagine him doing everything but play cricket with his boys—two such bonnie sturdy little rogues in grey Highland costume. I don't think Mrs. Fortescue—that is, Cousin Katherine—a bit pretty," wrote Dym; "but she has dark eyes, and an oval face, and looks very elegant. She wore quite a serpentine train of white muslin. I watched her all the afternoon,

and I cannot think how she managed all those limp-looking folds. With her long neck and slow movements, and all that whiteness, she looked just like a swan. She does it beautifully, but I think she must have been studying it for years," went on naughty Dym. "And every now and then she wakes up from her languor, and is as brisk as possible. I know now what Mr. Chichester meant by her management."

And then she went on to describe the London cousins. Lady Marsden, a pretty clever widow, looking almost as young as her own daughter; and Miss Patty, with her voluble chatter and incessant questions; and a young cub of an undergraduate brother, "against whom no one must breathe a word," because he is Sir George Marsden, of Marsden Court; and Mrs. Trevor, a fine young woman, but so over-dressed that Dym at once said she must be a farmer's daughter, which was the truth; and her husband, a stout placid young man, looking very much the farmer too, and as unlike as possible to the lawyer he really was.

After that they formed into procession, the squire heading the van with Lady Marsden.

Dym followed slowly in their wake. They went first into the large central tent, which was devoted chiefly to the produce of the hot-houses and conservatories of the Great House and vicarage; here the fruit and flowers were really very beautiful. The other tent was less imposing, but far more interesting, as it contained merely the product of cottage gardens and

windows—small plates of homely vegetables, glass cases of honeycomb, piled-up heaps of fruit, and big nosegays, or "bowpots," as the villagers called them, this word defining excellently the gaudy pyramids of colour, banked up with green, that were disposed with more liberality than taste on the well-scoured wooden tables.

"This is not Honor's handiwork," Dym heard Mrs. Chichester say; and the squire, who seemed to hear everything, answered—

"Honor had enough to do with the large tent and the refreshment booth. I made her leave this to the boys and Grace Dunster. As usual, we had a dispute over it. She has vowed she will tell every one on the ground that it is my fault."

"You deserve to be punished for your interference, Guy," was the quiet answer. "You know the Nethecotes manage all these things. You had no business to be on the field at all."

"When Greek meets Greek, great is the tug of war. Fancy the ruling powers falling out between themselves. I think little Grace Dunster thought we were in earnest. Mother, there are the Fotheringays. Your court is getting too large; we had better adjourn to the other tent."

"Who is this Honor Nethecote every one seems talking about?" whispered Miss Patty to Mrs. Trevor.

"She is Mr. Nethecote's sister. That is he in the tweed coat and straw hat, just speaking

to the squire." Here some one trod on Dym's dress, and she lost the rest of the answer; but as she followed on more slowly, she found herself echoing Miss Patty's words—

"Who is Honor Nethecote?"

CHAPTER X.

NIDDERDALE COTTAGE.

"WHO is Honor Nethecote?"

Dym's curiosity began to feel aggravated by the constant recurrence of this name. Who could this mysterious individual be, who seemed to be the presiding spirit of the day, so that nothing could be done without her supervision? Was she young or old? If she were Humphrey's sister, was she plain and freckled as he was? Dym wondered. There is nothing like a mystery to excite interest. An unconscious fascination impelled Dym to every spot where Honor Nethecote's name was mentioned—it seemed to be on the lips of every one, rich or poor.

"Honor's taste—how beautiful!" from Mrs. Trevor. "Miss Nethecote—ah, she promised Doll her fuchsia should be put in a good place." The latter *sotto voce* from a lame, sickly-looking girl, who with one crutch was trying to push her way through a throng of merry-faced lasses. "Ah, where's Phil, I wonder?" with a patient sort of sigh that excited Dym's compassion.

"You are tired—can I help you to find your

friends? It must be very fatiguing to you in this hot tent and with all this crowd," says Dym, in her pleasant voice.

"It is only Doll's fuchsia, thank you. Ah, there it is! I can see it over those heads."

"You had better see it closer," returns Dym kindly. She pilots a way for the lame girl, and stations her very carefully where she can get a good view of the precious flower. She has no idea that this is the object of Guy Chichester's chivalry this morning—the lame dressmaker, Grace Dunster. Grace looks up with sparkling eyes. "Isn't it beautiful? I wish Doll could see how well it looks. If it had been a child we couldn't have tended it more. Phil used to wash its leaves and count the buds every morning. I think the squire will be pleased with it. Phil will carry it up when the show is over."

"Is it a present for the squire?" asks Dym, with a winning look. She hears all about it presently, when she and Grace are sitting together on a shady seat on a hillock under some trees. The bands tune up as briskly as though they were in the Cheltenham or Montpelier Gardens. Mrs. Chichester and her court have retired to the coolest tent; the villagers are beginning to come in, in knots of twos and threes. Dym sees Phyllis walking with her fellow-servants from the Hall. Mistress Dorothy, in her black silk and Paisley shawl, curtsies primly as she passes the hillock where Dym and her lame companion sit.

"I should like to hear all about it, Grace," says Dym, settling herself comfortably against the tree-trunk; and Grace, nothing loth, complies.

It was a long story, but Dym did not weary of it—possibly because it reminded her of Will's, wherein Mr. Chichester was ever the hero; without doubt he was Grace's hero. The little dressmaker's eyes filled with tears when she spoke of his generosity and goodness.

Grace Dunster lived over Burgess the tailor's; she had two little rooms there, which she called home. But she did not live alone; she had two young sisters, whom she had to maintain with her needle.

Grace did not dwell much on their poverty and struggles—it was not for naught that Grace Dunster had that sweet earnest face; patience and endurance were written in every feature of it—but she spoke of Doll, who had epileptic fits, and would not live to be a woman; and Phil, who turned out to be a girl, "who is very rough, but homely, miss, and scours and cleans up so nicely, and helps me with a white seam when her lessons are done and the other girls are at play."

And then Grace related, but very briefly, how her foot had been bad from a child, and how it grew worse and worse, "till the bone seemed on fire with pain;" and Grace worked on by day, and cried herself to sleep at night, but softly, so as not to wake Phil; and how her face grew pale and pinched-like with the con-

stant trouble of it, and folks said she would go into a consumption and die; and then how this came about to the squire's ears, and one day, when Grace was sitting alone sobbing a bit over her work—just for relief's sake—the squire and Miss Nethecote came in together, and were both of them so kind, and the squire asked her if she would be a good brave girl, and do what he told her; and when she said "Yes," but very wanderingly, he told her that Miss Nethecote had offered to take Phil and Doll home to Nidderdale Cottage, and promised her old servant should look after Doll; but that he was going to send Grace down to a grand London hospital, where the cleverest doctors in the world would see her poor foot, and tell her what must be done to it; and when Grace cried, though it was only out of pure gratitude and joy like, "at being so thought of, miss," he promised there and then that he would come up to London and see her.

And he kept his word, and came twice or thrice into the great hospital ward when the amputation was over, and Grace was relieved of her life-long burden; nay, more, when the doctors said it would be long before she would be strong and fit for work again, he sent her to another beautiful hospital built somewhere on the seashore, where for six happy weeks Grace could see the waves rippling over the sand, and drink in health with the sweet sea-breezes.

Nor did his kindness end there; "for if he did not meet me himself at the station and bring

me home in his fine open carriage, which will hold eight comfortable, miss; and there I found Phil and Doll and Miss Nethecote, and the tea-table all dressed up with flowers, just as though it were a school feast. Why, it is making you cry, miss, I declare!"

Dym did actually brush away a tear. The narrative, simple as it was, moved her to tearful interest. What a great benevolent heart it must be that could interest itself in the trouble of a poor seamstress! Other men were doubtless as generous as Mr. Chichester; many a one would have sent the poor little sufferer to the London hospital, and, perhaps, even to the convalescent home—the lives of rich men abound in such deeds of largesse and almsgiving—but who among these Dives in purple would have troubled themselves with even a thought of the girl lying lonely and home-sick in her distant ward, pining for news of Doll and Phil, and ready to cry her eyes out with joy over the beautiful letter Miss Nethecote had sent, enclosing a note in round hand from Phil; and who but the squire would have brought his carriage round to the station door, and himself supported poor little Grace's tottering steps down those dreadful stone stairs! But the climax of the story, the flower-decked table, brought her back to the old grievance: "Who was Miss Nethecote?" And she was about to put some leading question to Grace when Mr. Nethecote himself appeared at the foot of the hillock.

He doffed his straw hat, and looked so hard at

Dym that she felt frightened. She found out afterwards that he was very short-sighted.

"Miss Elliott—ah, Grace, how d'ye do? In pleasant company, I see — Miss Elliott, the squire wants you to come down to the tent and have some refreshment, before it is too hot and crowded."

He had not forgotten her, then? Dym looked pleased, but returned rather diffidently that she would rather stay where she was, unless Mrs. Chichester wanted her.

"Madam doesn't want you," returned Mr. Nethecote brusquely; "there's a regular bevy of dowagers in there," nodding contemptuously to the tent below. "'See the conquering Hero comes,' that's out of compliment to you, squire," as Guy Chichester's broad shoulders appeared below. "Here is a rebel for you! Miss Elliott wont obey orders—rather stop where she is."

Mr. Chichester looked up and smiled. "As though you can expect anything but contradiction from a woman, Humphrey," in a tone of unusual benevolence. "Can't you bring her and Grace something good up there? Miss Elliott, I think after all you put on that pink gown for effect—you are so determined to show it. Holloa, Berwick, what are you after?" as the boy rushed past him, panting and breathless.

"I am only going to the house to fetch my wickets and bat, Cousin Guy; those fellows up there want to get up a game of cricket. Well, what now, squire?" as Guy coolly took him by

the shoulders and marched him off in a different direction, to where a knot of boys were assembled.

"I say, you boys, who proposed cricket?"

The squire's tone was so awful, that consternation and silence prevailed, till a small boy said, "Burgess, sir;" and was instantly hustled to the front.

"Who was that who peached on the other? Tim Rydell? Tim, I pity your father. I wouldn't be the father of a sneak. Burgess, stand forward."

"Yes, squire."

A sturdy curly-haired boy planted himself before the squire, grinning from ear to ear.

"You are the culprit, Ned, are you?"

"Yes, squire," perfectly unabashed by the publicity of the rebuke.

"You are the boy who seduced stilts and monkeys into this ground, and now you propose cricket."

"Well, we tossed up heads and tails, and cricket came down heads; and Brookes said dancing was slow, and we couldn't manage prisoner's base, and Master Burke he offered to fetch his bat and things; and it is such a nice smooth bit of land, squire," finished Ned in a wheedling tone.

"You are a nice set of scamps, you are! Do you think cricket-balls are sugar-plums, that they can be allowed amongst the tents and dresses? Do you want Miss Nethecote to act long-stop, as she did last year, when a ball from

your bowling, Burgess, nearly knocked down Grace Dunster? Did I not interdict cricket then and there? What do you mean by such gross disobedience? Berwick, I am ashamed of you!"

"Please, Cousin Guy——"

"Please, squire"—a chorus of "O sir!"

"Not a word. I hate insubordination. Boys, you all know me—that I will be minded. Berwick, you deserve a thrashing; only your mother would never forgive me; nevertheless, you and Burgess, as ringleaders, must quickly march off the field; and you may take that little sneak Tim Rydell with you. Come, be off with you!"

"Nay, nay, I'll go bail for them, squire," in Humphrey Nethecote's tones.

"No bail!" was the severe answer.

"Boys, come to me; I will take you under my protection. Mr. Chichester, you cannot refuse a favour to a lady—please grant a general amnesty and pardon the ringleaders."

"Too bad, Miss Nethecote—you have always a trick of turning up when you are not wanted. I am not in a mood for forgiveness."

Dym peeped forward, but there was such a crowd round the squire and the boys that, in spite of her elevated position, it was impossible to see clearly; there were several ladies standing near, all strangers to Dym, but the voice did not belong to them—it evidently proceeded from one of the tent-doors.

"In spite of your remarks, justice must be tempered with mercy. Boys, make your apology

to the squire, and promise to do better for the future."

"We are sorry, sir." "I wish I had knocked my head against a wall before I proposed it," added Ned remorsefully; and "Cousin Guy, I'll just carry my bat back," from Berwick.

"Well, is Justice appeased, Mr. Chichester?"

"Oh, go your ways, boys," was the squire's somewhat irritated answer; "next time, when Miss Nethecote is not by to beg you off, I'll thrash the whole lot of you." This terrible threat was received with a shout of laughter; and the crowd merrily dispersed.

"Got her innings as usual," muttered Mr. Chichester, as he went back to rejoin the ladies; and Humphrey Nethecote came back to Dym with the good things he had provided for her and Grace.

"Which was Miss Nethecote?" she asked, leaning eagerly forward; but Humphrey, who was assisting Grace, did not hear her question. By-and-bye, when they had finished, and Grace, having sighted Phil from below, had hastily adjusted her crutch and gone down in search of her, this singular individual came and stationed himself against the tree-trunk.

"Don't let me detain you. I mean, there is plenty of room to sit down," Dym hastily added, fearing she had been rude.

"Eh, what? I am afraid I did not hear you. Oh, there is no occasion for me to go down just yet—and the squire asked me particularly to look after you."

"He is very kind," answered Dym, in a low voice.

"Kind! Ah, the squire's always kind, except to those boys just now. Ah, Honor had him there. I told Honor once that the squire ought to be a Jew; he is so careful to carry out that bit of the Mosaic law about the widow, the fatherless, and the stranger. I should think you found that out at St. Luke's, didn't you?" with an interrogative glance.

Dym wondered what Mr. Nethecote would have thought if he had heard the story of Ned Smithers. Not but what it was all of a piece with Grace Dunster's hero. Will had done well to warn her against hero-worship. She assented very quietly to Mr. Nethecote's questions. To tell the truth, the worthy Yorkshireman somewhat bored Dym, who was a very lively little creature; he had spoiled her *tête-à-tête* with Grace; and she made up her mind with Dymphna-like obstinacy that if his sister were like him she must be very plain indeed.

"That was a queer idea of the squire's, taking up his residence in Kentish Town, wasn't it?" went on Humphrey, in his gruff good-natured voice. "There's no notion what a man may do when he is once off his balance. I daresay, if your brother were here, he could tell us plenty of amusing anecdotes. No matter where he goes or what he does, our squire is sure to be talked about."

Dym, who was very shrewd, gathered three things from this speech—first, to quote common

parlance, "that there was a screw loose somewhere;" but this was no news to her. Only the expression "off his balance," set her thinking whether Mr. Chichester might be somewhat wrong in his head; but after a minute she rejected this idea with disdain: the very thought was disloyal to her hero. Next she discovered that this worthy Humphrey was bitten with the same enthusiasm, and that in some sort of way he was a sturdy matter-of-fact prop to the erratic genius of Guy Chichester.

"Ho, ho! so the squire has his Mentor too," she thought gleefully; but in this respect she was wrong. Humphrey Nethecote was not Guy Chichester's Mentor.

On the contrary; she found out afterwards, though Humphrey in his canine-like fidelity would have laid down his life for his friend, he did not possess the slightest power or influence over the squire—his next speech proved the truth of this.

"Eh, it was an odd idea," he continued musingly. "Perhaps I am a little old-fashioned in my notions—Honor says I am—but I never can see the sense of a man kicking over the traces. That's the squire's fault; he gets the bit between his teeth, a wrong idea in his head, and he bolts off with it. Why, if he had stuck to my advice—which he never does, bless you!—he would have just taken the home farm off my shoulders, and worked all those new-fangled ideas of his. But no; he must be off to Kentish Town, and teaching ragged boys in the

night-school, and doing goodness knows what besides; and for all I can say, Honor only laughs at him."

Evidently Mr. Nethecote thought that Mr. Elliott's sister would be pretty conversant with the squire's vagaries. She hardly knew what answer to make to this strange confidence; and afraid of saying too much, she merely asked, "Is Honor your sister?" which was a little bit of hypocrisy on her part.

"What's to do now?" he returned, looking at her in surprise. "Of course Honor Nethecote must be my sister—my half-sister, I should say, for the same mother couldn't have the pair of us."

"Then she is not like you?"

Humphrey Nethecote wrinkled up his light eyebrows; and light eyebrows on a freckled face are no beauty.

"Coom, coom, Miss Elliott, you are trying your fu-un on me;" for Mr. Nethecote's speech was very broad. "I must tell the Duchess that — like me, indeed!" and Mr. Nethecote laughed heartily.

"How was I to know?" returned Dym a little pertly. "I have not seen your sister."

"Do you know what a farmer once said to her? 'Thee art t' tightest lass, Miss Nethecote,' he said, 'not only in the West Riding, but in the whole of Yorkshire; and I'd drive a hard bargain to buy thee if thy cheeks were but a verra little bit redder.' How the squire laughed, and advised Honor to rub her cheeks!"

Dym was very perplexed, but she began to like honest Humphrey in spite of herself.

"Honor would have been up at the Great House to see you this morning," he continued, "but for the bustle of this flower-show. It is early days to ask you, but I suppose Madam, as we call her, is very kind to you?"

"Very; but I like the squire best," returned Dym, with the fearlessness, but hardly the reticence of eighteen. Humphrey gave a low prolonged whistle, and stared at her; but Dym's piquante, innocent, little face evidently disarmed him, and he broke into a candid smile.

"Ah, everybody's alike, high and low, rich and poor, man or woman. I believe there's the bell for the prizes—see how the people are crowding in. Shall I elbow you a passage, Miss Elliott, or do you prefer the fresh air outside?"

"Yes, yes; don't wait for me, please—I know you are wanted;" and afraid of monopolizing him, Dym ran down the tiny slope and wandered about the field by herself rather aimlessly, thinking every now and then that even that stupid Humphrey was better company than none; and keenly alive to the discomfort of being alone in a crowd, before many minutes were over she was ready to envy Phyllis, who was walking with a trim-looking lad, evidently a mechanic by his dress.

Phyllis blushed and curtsied in answer to Dym's nod; and then Dym came upon Grace Dunster sitting in a shady nook with a shock-

headed girl in a flaming red frock and white pinafore, evidently Phil, but both looked so happy that she would not disturb them, and wandered on disconsolately till she found an empty seat near a stand of exotics; there were very few people about, and in watching them Dym got drowsy, and nearly went to sleep.

She really was dreaming, or something like it; for she opened her eyes and said, "Will!" when a hand was laid on her shoulder.

"Will! no such luck. Here, I've found her asleep, I do declare!" cried Guy Chichester's cheery voice; at which Dym was wide awake in a moment. "Here, Honor, come and take this child home with you, and give her some tea; my mother will not want her—we have twenty to thirty people up at the house."

"Very well," assented a quiet voice behind her.

Dym turned quickly round, and at last found herself face to face with the owner of it.

And her first impression was that Miss Nethecote was the most singular person she had ever met, and her next that she was the most beautiful woman she had ever seen in her life. And this opinion was confirmed when she saw her in her own home, when the shady hat no longer concealed the broad white forehead and wide-open grey eyes. The Yorkshire farmer was right: Miss Nethecote was very pale, but the shape of the face was perfect; and Dym had never before seen that peculiar shade of brown hair which looks as though the sun were always shining on it.

The singularity, after all, lay chiefly in her dress: in spite of the warmth of the evening and the festivity of the occasion, Miss Nethecote wore a dark-blue cashmere dress, fitting almost as closely as a riding-habit, and a low riding hat and feathers. "Very well," was all she said; but the pleasantness of her smile made up for the brevity of her greeting, and she held out her hand to Dym. It was ungloved, and even in that moment of soft pressure a vivid remembrance of Mr. Chichester's words in the porch rushed to her memory. He had said he "liked a large benevolent-looking hand." Here it was; woman's hand as it was Dym's lithe little fingers seemed quite lost in it.

Strange that that first moment of greeting should bring pain to Dym! Might it not be ominous of the strange power and fascination that, in spite of all her efforts, Honor Nethecote was to exercise over our little heroine? For as time went on Dym could have wished she had never seen Honor Nethecote's face; while all the while she loved and cleaved to her, as women have loved and cleaved since the days of Ruth the Moabitess.

Miss Nethecote, after her brief word of assent, seemed to think further delay unnecessary, for she turned aside as though to lead the way, but Mr. Chichester stopped her.

"If I were you, I would take the short cut across the fields: she seems very tired. I will make it all right with my mother."

Miss Nethecote nodded. "Come, Miss Elliott."

"Good-night, Honor," looking wistfully after them.

"Good-night, squire," with a nonchalant wave of her hand, without turning her head. "Don't forget mercy when you are dealing with justice next time."

Dym, who felt, lamb-like, that she was going to be sacrificed to a fresh whim, and was not quite easy in her mind as to what Mrs. Chichester would say to this proceeding, could not help looking round as they walked on. Mr. Chichester was still standing in the tent-door, shading his eyes and watching them. They were crossing on the unfrequented part of the field. "Can you climb a fence?" asked Miss Nethecote abruptly. Here was a new inconsistency: fancy this tall magnificent-looking woman climbing a fence! But to Dym's surprise she achieved it far more lightly than even Dym herself.

"I hope you are not afraid of bulls," was the next observation; to which Dym, without any hesitation, replied that she was very, very much afraid of them, and that, if Miss Nethecote would allow her, she would rather go back; and so on.

This brought matters to a standstill; and Miss Nethecote walked on for a minute, as though gravely considering the position of affairs.

"If we go back through the village and round

by the Mill, it will make the difference of more than three-quarters of a mile, and Mr. Chichester says you are very tired. So am I," she added, seeing Dym was ready to disclaim this eagerly. "Mr. Trevor's cattle will certainly be out in the field—I passed them this afternoon; but old Cerberus, his black bull, was not amongst them. Yes," she continued, with the decision of a general who had just reviewed his forces, and had made up his mind to do battle—"yes, I think we can venture. If you are afraid, you shall take the side nearest the hedge. I'll promise you for your comfort, Miss Elliott, that I will be thoroughly tossed before I will let them touch you."

All this was very terrible to Dym; but there was a "no-appeal" sort of tone in Miss Nethecote's voice which made her think an argument would be fruitless. Evidently there was more than one strong will in Birstwith. A consciousness of not wishing to be laughed at made her determined to go through with it. She quaked visibly, though, when they came to the meadow, and found it full of moving black bodies and formidable horns; though Miss Nethecote pretended not to see it. "Fortune favours the brave," they say. There was no awful catastrophe or hair-breadth escape of two females down in the *Pateley Bridge, Nidderdale, and Ripon Herald* that week. Tossing and goring may be Taurus-like qualities; but Squire Trevor's cattle preferred quietly ruminating and whisking

off flies to any such amusement, and only one sound resembling a bellow made Dym's heart beat more quickly.

"There, the danger is over: as usual, anticipation is worse than reality. But I know what our black cattle are to a Londoner's eyes. You would have good nerve, Miss Elliott, if you had not a trick of turning so pale. In six months you will think nothing of going through these fields alone."

"Never!" was the vehement rejoinder. "Why, how far you live from the village, Miss Nethecote!"

"By choice, and not from necessity," was the somewhat singular reply; and, as Dym looked surprised, "Before Mr. Trevor came to Birstwith my brother wished very much to take his house; but I told him it was far too near the Great House and the Vicarage, and he gave it up, though it was larger and more convenient for him, poor fellow! But I could not tolerate living in the village."

"Mr. Chichester seems to like it."

"Oh, the squire! He is no criterion. In spite of his liking, he takes care to relieve it often enough of his presence. If one were a man, able to go to London, Paris, or Rome, or even to Kentish Town, when one wished, it might be different; but a woman is such a cooped-up creature," with a sigh ending in a smile. "Why, I should be obliged to stop in from week's end to week's end, and repent in dust and ashes when-

ever I add a fresh trimming to my dress or get a new bonnet. I have left off dressing in Birstwith."

Dym was getting new lights now. "You mean that every one notices what you have on and talks about it. I have heard it is always the case in villages."

"Oh, the talk would not hurt me. I never hear gossip. It is the base imitation of the real article that tries my woman's soul. Never believe a woman is above this weakness, Miss Elliott; it is a libel on our sex. All the good women in the Bible were fond of dress. Oh, I am no Puritan, not I!"

"I think it is too bad to copy fashions," exclaimed Dym, who was enjoying this thoroughly feminine conversation.

"Do you? You have a pink bonnet on today. Yes; it is very pretty — inexpensively trimmed too; it will just come within the means of Phyllis and her sisters; unless, not being Mrs. Fortescue's or Miss Nethecote's, it is not fashionable enough for them." Then, as Dym laughed: "I assure you once, Miss Elliott, I wore a grey silk—I adore grey silk. The following Sunday —no, the next but one—half the church was in grey. I was not in a devout mood, and I counted fifteen, in all materials, from grey rep and poplin down to mousseline de laine and grey duffle. Absurd, was it not?" as Dym laughed. "Now you may form some sort of conjecture why I dislike living in a village. One may wear

out Birstwith patience by adhering closely to one costume; but in other ways how is Birstwith's curiosity to be baffled?"

Miss Nethecote had a slow, musing way of talking occasionally, but she looked up now, and spoke more quickly.

"Ah, there's our house—Nidderdale House, or Cottage, we call it. You can see the low grey roof shining through the trees."

"And that other one?" asked Dym, pointing to a building a little farther down the road.

"That is Woodside, where Mr. Grey, the doctor, lives. It is a little out of the way for his practice, but there was no house vacant in the village. His wife is a sad invalid. I have been sitting with her nearly all the afternoon, gossiping and playing with her babies."

"Do you like her? Is she nice?" For Dym had a laudable desire to learn all she could of her future neighbours.

"Yes, I like her very much; she is the nicest woman in Birstwith," was the frank rejoinder.

"What, nicer than Mrs. Chichester?" But Dym was sorry for her thoughtless remark afterwards. A slight, almost imperceptible, change came over Miss Nethecote's fine face; but when Dym looked again it was gone. Possibly Miss Nethecote thought honesty was the best policy, for her answer was very straightforward.

"Well, perhaps I am not a fair judge. I like Mrs. Chichester extremely, but then we never can get on together. When two women

have two such wills, it would be wonderful if they were not to clash sometimes. Don't you like a thoroughly helpless woman?"

"No," returned Dym, promptly, finding it was necessary to assert her own individuality; "not at all."

"That is because you are helpless yourself. What," as Dym seemed bent on defending herself, "don't you like to lean all your weight on somebody? Is not it 'Will, Will!' from morning to night? You see, a little bird tells me all manner of things, Miss Elliott. One of these days it will not be 'Will,' but somebody else."

"I am sure I shall not like Mrs. Grey," returned Dym, viciously. What was the use of asserting herself? Already she was worsted in her argument. Of course she was helpless, and she knew it; but Miss Nethecote need not have found it out so soon: she was as bad as, or even worse than, the squire himself.

"You are deciding on poor evidence. If we were not both so tired, I would take you on to Woodside, and make you retract your words before tea. As it is, I will content myself with observing that Esther Grey is the sweetest woman and the worst wife I ever saw; if she were not such a good mother, I might declare her unredeemable."

"My mind refuses to admit such an inconsistency, Miss Nethecote."

"You are afraid you spoke prematurely. Pray don't go to Mrs. Fortescue for her opinion of my favourite; she says Esther is a wretched

manager, and that Mr. Grey has a sad time of it with an ailing wife, six children, and small means; and perhaps she is right. Well, we all have our faults; it is *peccavi* with most of us. Now, is this not a pretty corner?"

They had crossed the last field, and had come out on a little patch of white road shaded with trees, and with a trout stream flowing beside it. Beyond lay a picturesque piece of broken grass land, resembling a miniature common.

"The air is fresher and more bracing up here than if we lived lower down in the valley. Well, welcome to Nidderdale Cottage, Miss Elliott;" and unlocking a door in the wall, Dym found herself in a pleasant garden—half garden, half orchard—with a trim little lawn and straggling walks, bordered with apple-trees, and a long grey cottage, with a bow window, the porch quite smothered with honeysuckle and roses.

"What a dear place!" cried Dym. There was a bubble and trickle of water everywhere; on the lawn was a bed of creamy tea-roses; in every corner, and even through the trees, gleamed tall turk's-cap lilies; a sweetbrier hedge steeped the evening air with fragrance; some doves cooed from the roof. "How sweet and still it all is! Of course it is not so grand, but it is prettier far than Ingleside."

"Oh, don't speak against Ingleside! I love it," returned Miss Nethecote, rather contradictively. "Yes, it is pretty enough, and Humphrey takes great pains with it. But if women have cages, I should like mine to be a gilded one.

The rooms are not high or large enough for my taste. But all the same," continued this singular being, "I suppose I shall live and die here."

Dym made no answer. To her Nidderdale Cottage appeared a perfect Paradise. The rooms were not large, certainly, and were evidently few in number, but they were furnished with exquisite taste, and in perfect accordance with the cottage-like exterior. The principal sitting-room—Miss Nethecote corrected her when she said drawing-room—was fitted up with grey damask, and had rose hangings; and Honor's room was full of beautiful things—Parian statuettes, Swiss carvings, a kneeling figure in Genoese marble, and Roman mosaics were prettily grouped on table and bracket. "After all," as Dym thought, "there was no lack of gilding in Miss Nethecote's cage." Guy Chichester had said that whatever Humphrey Nethecote touched turned to gold. It certainly seemed as though it were his hobby to lavish pretty things on his sister. In spite of the low ceiling and latticed windows, she thought that there was not a room in Ingleside more to her taste than Honor's bower.

It made her think more highly of Mr. Nethecote, and she was rather disappointed when Honor, in her matter-of-fact way, remarked that they had newly furnished the house last year, when some money had come to her, but that the statuettes and Swiss carvings had been given her by a friend.

"How nice to have such a friend!" ejaculated Dym, in the innocence of her heart.

"Very," returned Miss Nethecote, drily, "especially as I hate gifts, and the friend knows that I do. Miss Elliott, if you are ready, shall we go downstairs? Humphrey will be on the field till nine o'clock, but he will be home in time to walk back to Ingleside with you."

What a pleasant evening that was! Dym put down her first visit to Nidderdale Cottage as one of her red-letter days. She had never before enjoyed the society of an intellectual, thoroughly womanly woman; for, with all her eccentricities, Miss Nethecote was certainly that.

They grew very confidential over the cosy little meal, which was laid out in the bow-window of a tiny room looking over the trout stream and the meadow; the grass ran up to the very window; one stepped over the ledge on to the green soft carpet. There was a group of alder-trees at one end, and two beautiful Alderneys, as unlike as possible to Squire Trevor's cattle, were quietly chewing the cud under their shade; a row of beehives stood near the house; a flock of white geese were stretching out their long necks and flapping their wings noisily.

"How beautiful!" observed Dym, with something like a sigh.

"Yes, if only cows and grass could fill one's life," repeated Miss Nethecote, with a dreamy smile. She had dropped the slight brusquerie that Dym had noticed—for people said Miss Nethecote could be brusque sometimes, and they were right; she sat opposite Dym, with grand white forehead and bright candid eyes, looking

so fair and good that Dym caught herself wondering what Will would think of her, and if she would be right in electing Miss Nethecote as her heroine.

Dym's straightforward little soul was charmed with the largeness and simplicity of Honor's nature. With all her reticence, she could be as frank and outspoken as Dym herself.

Her answers always went straight to the point. Honor was always ready with her yea, yea, and her nay, nay, when other people would have hesitated or equivocated. She was perfectly honest—people said too much so; for example, Dym was admiring a richly-chased chocolate-pot, and asked if it were an heirloom.

"No," returned Miss Nethecote quietly; "it was a present from the same kind friend to Humphrey on his birthday. We do not boast heirlooms in our family. I remember the time when Humphrey was quite a poor man—that is, comparatively poor, you know. Ah, he has had his work to do in the world! No wonder he is a little rough, poor fellow. In those days I did not talk of grey-silk gowns, Miss Elliott."

"I think I heard Mr. Chichester say something of this," replied Dym.

"Did he tell you that we had lodgings at the Mill, and that no one in Birstwith would have thought of visiting us? That was when Humphrey was the old squire's under-bailiff, and I was little more than a child. Poor old Humphrey, his pride had something to bear then. And just look at him now—there is not a man more respected in

the West Riding; and it is all his own doing too."

"After all there must be something in Humphrey Nethecote," thought Dym remorsefully.

"But now I want to know more about you and your brother," continued Miss Nethecote winningly. She took the girl's hand and drew her gently to the corner of the old-fashioned couch, and then sat down beside her. "Never mind about Humphrey and me—it is a stupid subject, and one that will keep. I have heard so much about Mr. Elliott and St. Luke's, and I am longing to hear more."

Dym needed no other encouragement. In a few more minutes she was pouring out her little life history of failures and trials. Miss Nethecote listened with admirable patience to the long story of Will's illness, which Dym seemed never weary of repeating, and did not once own she had heard it all before. Now and then she spoke a few words of encouragement and sympathy, as though to draw her out.

But, as Dym remembered afterwards, Miss Nethecote talked very little.

She sat, in the flower-scented twilight, beside the open window, looking dreamily out on the bed of roses all the time Dym was faltering out her tender little egotisms. The moonlight touched the white forehead and coronet of brown hair with a soft halo, and then fell on the large ringless hands, so quietly folded in her lap; once they stirred slightly as Dym waxed bolder and spoke of Mr. Latimer and the Great Unknown.

She caught her breath and sighed when Dym, in her young enthusiasm, blundered on to the story of the dying navvy, and once bade her go on almost abruptly.

"I did not tell this to Mrs. Chichester this morning," finished Dym, with an excited little laugh; "I thought it better not. And now—how cold your hands are, Miss Nethecote!"

"Oh, it is nothing; we have been sitting so long by the open window. Your voice was rather pathetic in the darkness. Yes, you were right not to tell. Guy—Mr. Chichester, I mean—would not like any one to know this. You must keep it sacred between yourself and Will;" then, as she drew the girl towards her with a kiss, "There, God bless you! I mean, thank Heaven for it! You see, he died repentant."

But the strangest part was that, as Honor kissed her, something wet touched Dym's cheek at the same moment. And the next minute Honor rose without a word, and passed through the open window into the lily-scented darkness.

CHAPTER XI.

A BIT OF THE SQUIRE'S TEMPER.

DYM'S first day at Ingleside had been an eventful one; but for the next few weeks her life flowed on with almost unbroken regularity.

A pleasing routine of duties filled up every hour of the day. Never idle herself, Mrs. Chichester found constant employment for her young companion's active mind and fingers—listlessness and vacuum were abhorrent to the mistress of Ingleside. In spite of her drudgery as governess, Dym had never been so fully as well as happily employed in her life.

Dym fitted into her niche with admirable tact. Quick to observe and learn, she soon discovered her proper place in the house, and kept it. Her bright brisk ways suited Mrs. Chichester to a nicety, and though she still lectured the girl kindly on little failings, or took her to task gently for her brusquerie and impulsiveness, there was such sincere affection in her tone that Dym ceased to take umbrage at it, or to shy at every word like an unbroken colt.

Dym on her part soon learnt to love Mrs.

Chichester very heartily, though her love as yet lacked the enthusiasm of thorough partisanship. Loyal to her old predilection, she took Guy Chichester's part through thick and thin, and stoutly maintained that his mother wanted tact; but she was very tolerant nevertheless, and soon manifested an almost daughter-like dutifulness, submitting herself to the dictums of the elder lady with a docility that secretly astonished Mr. Chichester.

"The Dymphna angles are wearing off nicely and rounding themselves," he wrote once to Will. "My mother's discipline is doing your sister a great deal of good. I did not think before that Miss Elliott possessed the bump of reverence, but she gives in to all my mother's fads very prettily, and it is pleasant to see their honest affection for each other. My mother has been twice as bright since Miss Elliott came."

It was a pity Dym could not see that letter, for the one drop that was lacking in her enjoyment was Mr. Chichester himself.

He was very good to her, and showed her plenty of grave kindness; but the indefinable change of manner that she had first noticed in St. Luke's porch had returned the very next day after the flower-show, and had continued with slight intermission ever since.

Dym had never again sinned against his fastidiousness; but for some days she was nervous, and feared to address him, till Mrs. Chichester, with characteristic gentleness, set her mind completely at rest on this subject.

"My dear," she said, one day, flushing a little over her words, as though they were difficult to her, "my son has been talking to me, and I find that his views differ from mine. I am afraid he has sadly radical opinions; but we must not forget that he is master here. He wishes no formality in the form of your address to him; so, my dear"—as Dym blushed and looked uncomfortable—"you may consider my words on Wednesday as completely unsaid; but all the same, I cannot help saying that since then I have been greatly pleased at your change of manner;" and Dym tried hard to be grateful for this commendation. This time she certainly behaved very well; but it is to be doubted whether she ever really enjoyed a conversation with Mr. Chichester in his mother's presence.

There is no tribunal so severe to a woman as the censorship of her own sex. A man's judgment is lenient in comparison. Argus of the hundred eyes ought to have been a woman. It is lamentable how few ever compass the spirit of the marvellous chapter on charity. Very often the purer and better a woman, the harsher will be her judgment. "Stand back, that the hem of my garment may not be soiled," is often the inner language of a woman's breast. It is the phylacteries and long garments of the Pharisees over again. Alas, what pitiable Christianity! How opposed to the wide-open hand of the benevolence that, fearless of self-compromise, helps and lifts out of the mire!

And how Draco-like are the laws of women

after all! Life for life; no forgiveness for sullied honour; no appeal against the righteous judgment of an unpitying world; pure eyes raised to heaven that would be better sometimes to be directed to earth, and hands whose whiteness is so carefully guarded, when, if contaminated by a passing touch, they would be washed white again even by the angels themselves.

For the angels look down on a world of sin, and love and pity it; and women at their purest come very far short of angels.

And when Dym knew both a little better, and could compare woman with woman, she learnt that this was the difference between Honor Nethecote and Mrs. Chichester; for the one held the narrowness of a gentle bigotry compared to the large-souled nature of the other.

Honor was severe, cruel even, in her estimate of the other sex; but she was never harsh to her own. She could be a little satirical sometimes to such women as Mrs. Fortescue; but to her sisterhood in general she was eminently loyal. And in this she was unlike other women.

And so people of Mrs. Fortescue's calibre called her fantastical and unconventional; and sometimes, though this latter word was whispered low, even a little improper.

And the best of them said she was too charitable.

And Mrs. Chichester shook her head and said the old grooves were the safest, and hoped that Honor would not infect Miss Elliott with her unfeminine notions; and went on delivering her

little lectures on propriety and decorum into Dym's shrinking ears.

But Dym never was sure, in spite of Jeremy Taylor's and Mrs. Chichester's strongly developed ideas on assurance, whether Honor's religion did not savour more of the doctrines of St. Paul. But being young she kept this opinion to herself.

Only one day she told Will of it, and Will agreed with her.

All her life long Dym stood a little in awe of Mrs. Chichester's lectures; but on the whole she took them very well, and after a time Mrs. Chichester, who had no daughter, learnt to make allowance for the eccentricities of youth, and to be more lenient to its follies.

Even in these early days they got on astonishingly well together.

And her duties came within the limits of her capacity, and kept her temper smooth.

There was no lap-dog to wash; but all the flower vases, baskets, and épergnes, down to the antique china bowl in Mrs. Chichester's private sanctum, the library, were given into Dym's charge, who perfectly revelled in flowers. In the sweet early mornings she would come in from terrace or garden, looking as fresh as a rosebud herself, and laden with treasures, great crimson-hearted roses or fragrant clove pinks, gathered with the dew still clinging to them. Dym's clear little lark-like voice would be heard ringing from room to room, as she arranged them in all manner of pretty devices.

In the mornings she read to Mrs. Chichester,

or wrote endless letters from her dictation. Mrs. Chichester would knit and dictate happily for hours; she always signed her name herself in her clear ladylike text, "Constance Medlicot Chichester." "Now, my dear, we will have the leading article and the court circular, and then we will go on with Mrs. Shimmelpennick's Life." With the exception of a chapter of Thomas à Kempis, Dym saw very little of the theological books. Mrs. Chichester was very methodical, and Dym soon learnt to read the Psalms and Morning Lessons as a matter of course. At times it must be confessed that Mrs. Shimmelpennick and the memorials of the Hare family bored her slightly. She had even the bad taste to prefer "Dombey and Son" to Macdonald's "Annals of a Quiet Neighbourhood." "Dickens is very good, but he is hardly a religious writer; we must be careful how we are carried away by our love of the amusing," prosed the elder lady gently.

"Dickens is delicious, and I half worship him," cried Dym rebelliously. "There is not a piece of pathos to equal little Paul's death. Dickens' books make me feel good. I want to do more for my fellow-creatures when I read them; he is noble, grand," went on the girl, waxing into enthusiasm. "When I read a story, I don't like it to be a sermon; if I must take them, I like my drugs to be disguised in sweetmeats."

"All children talk alike," returned her friend soberly. "I am fond of Dickens too, and little Paul's death, when Guy read it last night, made

me cry dreadfully. These works of fiction are very well, but we must not spoil our digestion with sugar-plums. I am afraid you do not find much pleasure in Mrs. Fletcher's 'Experiences,' my dear; but all the same, I believe it is more wholesome reading for the morning."

Dym had a little argument one day on the life of the Princess Louise of France; it was a lovely morning, warm, yet tempered with shade, and Dym had a rebellious conviction that the banks of the Nidd would be delicious on such a day.

"I think it was better to be the Princess Louise in her pink dress than the Mère Thérèse de St. Augustin," she exclaimed, half yawning with weariness and the *ennui* that written good thoughts always produce on a mind not ready to digest them. "What is the use of making oneself miserable? If I were a Romanist to-morrow, I would keep my common sense; what merit can there be, for example, in eating a rotten egg?"

"My dear, you are too apt to seize on an unimportant point in a book and bring it prominently forward. I suppose, not being Roman Catholics, our ideas differ; but I think these Carmelite nuns were good creatures; Mère Thérèse especially is a shining example of a *vie dévote.*"

"All the same, it is very disagreeable to be always trying to find disagreeable things to do," returned Dym stubbornly; "one has plenty without searching. The roses and sunshine

were made for our enjoyment. One of those old Fathers of whom you are so fond told us it was a good thing to abstain from smelling a rose sometimes. Hadn't we better draw down the blinds? I am sure Mère Thérèse would in our place."

"Get your hat and take Kelpie for a run across the meadows; the fine day is making you argumentative," interrupted Mrs. Chichester kindly, who had read the girl's restlessness aright. "There, put a marker in the place; I shall have plenty to think over when you are gone."

When Dym, needing no further word, had run out of the room, she sighed softly once or twice at the girlish irreverence. "There is no need to pull down the blind for me," she thought to herself. "When one enters the tunnel the light goes quickly. I have made two mistakes in my work this morning, and never found it out; and last night I startled Guy by falling over a footstool. If only I could say this, 'It needs be,' more happily;" and Mrs. Chichester leaned her head on her hand and sighed.

In spite of her narrowness, she was a brave woman, and could tell of many a hand-to-hand battle against depression in the long watches of the night, when Dym was dreaming happily of Will.

In the afternoons they used to drive out; sometimes, but not often, Guy drove them. Dym saw very little of him; he always dined

with them, but they rarely had a pleasant sociable evening afterwards.

When Dym first arrived things were rather different; he would follow them in from the dining-room, and would remain for an hour or two, either listening to her reading or going on with the book himself; sometimes he would tease his mother into an argument, or persuade them to accompany him to the billiard-room, and see him and Harry Trevor knock about a few balls for their amusement. Very often the Vicar and Mrs. Fortescue would come up to dinner, the latter in grande toilette; these evenings were more ceremonious and less pleasant. Dym, who had droll fancies sometimes, always spoke of them as the "wax-light evenings," as on those occasions the white china lamps were always replaced by an abundance of these wax tapers. Mr. Nethecote and his sister had not yet made their appearance at Ingleside.

But these pleasant ways were relinquished one by one. Before two weeks were over Dym ceased to wonder that Mrs. Chichester should require a companion, and was compelled to avow that there were serious flaws even in her hero. Dym had not often to complain of his ill-timed pleasantry, for he rarely joked at all, and then only on general subjects; now and then he would relapse into his abrupt quizzical moods, but generally he was merely kind and polite, and, if truth must be told, terribly absent.

Dym, who was on her best behaviour, never

ventured to remind him that she had not seen him for two days. He spoke quite sharply once when she commented very innocently on an unusually long absence. Mrs. Chichester, who felt for her discomfiture, hastened to console her.

"My son never likes his movements to be observed. When you know him better, you will not take a quick answer so much to heart. Guy is kindness itself, but he has a sharp way sometimes with him, and just now he is a little restless."

Dym got over this, but she never failed to fret over a missing good-night; and once her eyes filled with tears when Mr. Chichester came into the room and left it again without even seeing her. "He was kinder to me in Paradise Row," argued the girl sadly; and yet she had received abundant proof of his thoughtfulness and generosity.

Dym drove out every afternoon with Mrs. Chichester; they often made pleasant excursions to places of interest in the neighbourhood, or sometimes went long distances to pay or return calls. One afternoon they went on a shopping expedition to Harrogate, solely on Dym's account.

When Dym had been a week at Ingleside, Mrs. Chichester approached the subject of her wardrobe with the greatest tact and delicacy; they were going to have some friends to dinner—only Kate and Mr. Fortescue, and a gentleman from York—what was Miss Elliott going to wear?

Dym, who had rung the changes from shabby black silk to pink muslin for seven whole evenings, hung her head a little confusedly, and then summoning up her courage, honestly confessed the poverty of her resources. Will was too poor to buy her many dresses. What should she do? If Mrs. Chichester liked, she would willingly remain away for the evening. "I cannot help myself, but I have no right to shame you and Mr. Chichester by my shabbiness," cried Dym honestly.

Mrs. Chichester stroked her hair by way of answer.

"Don't talk of shabbiness. With your pretty figure you look well in anything; there is no fear of your shaming us. Well, I will talk of it again, my dear. Let Dorothy iron out your dress, and we shall see."

Of course Mrs. Chichester went to her son directly afterwards.

"What shall we do, Guy? They are so dreadfully poor, and I hate hurting people's pride. Perhaps if you gave me a little money to lay out for her, we might call it an advance." But Mr. Chichester objected.

"Advanced money is only borrowing. I don't see any merit in giving way to false pride. I always knew Miss Elliott and her brother were poor; but hitherto they have never been ashamed of their poverty."

"But, Guy——"

"But, mother, it would not be you if you did not try a little management. Why not

speak out plainly to Miss Elliott, 'I want my companion to look the lady she is; and as this is not possible without means, I am going to buy you two or three pretty dresses, and you must come with me and choose them.'"

"Don't you think she might feel hurt, Guy?"

"Not a bit of it."

Mr. Chichester was right. A few graceful words soon removed the difficulty, and put Dym completely at her ease.

"It is so very kind of you, my dear, to allow me to do this for you—you do not know what pleasure you are giving me," she said, so gratefully that Dym felt ashamed of the reluctance she had felt at first, and then gave herself up to the novel delights of shopping on an extensive scale.

I do not know that Mrs. Chichester thought the purchases as wonderful as Dym did, but all the same she was charmed with the girl's sobernerness and judgment; as she told her son afterwards, she did not believe a young thing could have shown such good common sense.

Cinderella, suddenly transported into fairyland, found herself utterly undazzled and beyond temptation; she would have nothing to say to the delicate maize and cream colours that were shown out of pure compliment to her olive complexion. "These things are not for me," she objected. She put them all aside, and would have nothing but a black silk. "One can always put on different ribbons, and make a fresh toilet.

You would grow so weary of one colour," she observed apologetically.

"Yes, a black silk will always look nice," assented Mrs. Chichester. She was very pleased with her young charge, and took especial pains over the richness of the fabric. Dym asked for white muslin after that; perhaps she remembered that Mr. Chichester had once said "that she would look well in a white gown." "That will wash nicely," she said, looking up with naïve, innocent eyes into Mrs. Chichester's face; but that lady was too deeply engrossed to answer her.

"You must have something for autumn wear; our northern winds are very cold," she returned, somewhat absently, as she added a dark tweed to Dym's stock, and then bade her match some gloves quickly. "Guy said we were to be sure not to forget these, and it is getting late." She would not listen when Dym hesitated, and hurried her out of the shop without listening to the girl's faltering thanks.

"I think we have done our business well, but I am tired, my dear, and must just close my eyes."

Dym covered her up without a word, and remained quite still during the rest of the drive; but how happy she was notwithstanding! A light breeze had set in; the grey dust whirled about the horses' feet, the hedgerows were white with it; the cows were lowing across the green upland; groups of rustic children stared open-mouthed at the fine equipage and the little bright-

eyed lady who sat in one corner smiling to herself; the sun was sinking slowly behind a great red and golden cloud. As they passed Ripley mill there was a gleam and splash of water. "How beautiful it is! One can be happy in this world after all," thought Dym. "Every one is so good to me just now, and I do not deserve it;" and there was a stirring of true affection in her heart as she glanced at her tired companion.

Mrs. Chichester was very quiet, but the sad, beautiful eyes were looking fondly at the landscape. "Two, perhaps three, years at the latest, and all this will be a memory," she thought. "Ah, well; one day, instead of green fields, it will be the 'lake mingled with fire.'"

That afternoon and evening lingered pleasantly in Dym's remembrance. Mr. Chichester was on the terrace when they returned, and had a kind greeting word for Dym as well as his mother. The conversation during dinner was carried on in a lighter vein than usual, and with less manifest effort on the squire's part; and afterwards he followed them into the drawing-room, and entertained them for an hour or two with recitals and anecdotes picked up in his foreign travel.

Never had Mrs. Chichester looked happier; and as to Dym, she could hardly compose herself to sleep sufficiently. "Why is he not always as he is to-night?" she thought; "it is Paradise Row over again. What has been the reason of all this stiffness and silence? How well and

cheerful he seemed! And I am sure by his manner he is pleased with me."

But Dym's pleasure at Mr. Chichester's changed manner did not last long; the next day he was taciturn, almost silent, and as time went on he became still more moody and restless.

In spite of her extreme loyalty, Dym was compelled to avow at times that Mr. Chichester was strangely irritable.

Trifles disturbed his equanimity; once or twice he spoke almost sharply to his mother, and though he certainly apologized afterwards, he seemed to resent the grieved look on her face as an additional provocation.

"Something has put the squire out," she heard Miles once say to his young assistant, Stewart; and the scared look on Stewart's face when his master severely reprimanded him for some breach of duty proved the squire's displeasure was a thing to be dreaded.

During those days Ingleside was not the paradise Dym thought it on her first arrival; the servants moved softly, almost timidly, about the house; and there was a wan look in Mrs. Chichester's eyes when she came down in the morning, as though she had not slept, and a visible flagging of spirits during the hours she and Dym passed alone together.

Just now their evenings were almost as solitary as their days.

The shooting season had commenced; the squire breakfasted in his library, and left the

house with his gun and dog directly afterwards, seldom making his appearance in the evening till the gong had sounded for dinner.

Strange to say, Dym almost learned to dread those dinners. Mrs. Chichester and she would make some effort to appear gay and unconcerned before the servants, but it was terribly hard work. Dym would collect little scraps of village gossip, and retail them bit by bit between the courses; Mrs. Chichester would respond, or address some questions to her son about the day's sport, which he would answer absently and without interest; but he seldom volunteered a subject on his own account, and now and then would relapse into such gloomy silence that the ladies, fearing to disturb him, talked under their breath to each other, or hurried over dessert in order to leave the room more quickly.

"My son is ill at ease," the poor lady once said to Dym, on one of these dismal occasions, when he had scarcely opened his lips except to refuse every dish that was offered him; she had spent a long time that morning with her cook, devising a dinner that should be composed of all his favourite dishes; and when he had waved aside the last impatiently, she could forbear no longer. "Guy, you will be ill if you do not eat," she said, anxiously; "you have never refused the mayonnaise before, dear—take a little just to please me."

"I dislike forcing an appetite," was the quick rejoinder. "Nethecote and I lunched heartily on the Five Acres. Your cook's skill

is wasted on me to night." And though actual tears of disappointment stood in his mother's eyes, he would touch nothing but some dry bread and celery.

"Madam fears he will be off again," was Humphrey's sole remark, when Dym, meeting him in the village, confided to him, somewhat incautiously, the state of affairs up at the Great House.

"It is just like the calm before a storm," replied the girl sadly. "All the servants look dull and half frightened, and Mrs. Chichester is so downcast I can hardly bear to see her; and nobody comes to see us—not even your sister."

But Mr. Nethecote merely shrugged his shoulders.

"When the storm comes, you will see Honor soon enough; she is no fair-weather friend to Madam," was the oracular answer.

Dym did not know what to make of it all. She often heard of Mr. Nethecote forming one of the shooting-party; but the squire never invited him in to dinner; and though Mrs. Chichester, willing to make a diversion, proposed it one day, the proposition was quietly negatived. But Dym was soon to judge for herself what the Chichester temper meant.

She was standing one evening by the open window, waiting for the announcement of dinner, when the squire made his appearance in the drawing-room somewhat earlier than usual.

Dym, who saw him enter, went forward involuntarily with a smile.

She was in a gayer mood than usual, having received a long, cheerful letter from Will that day.

She had just gathered some late blooming roses, and wore them as a breast-knot on her white dress. Somehow the roses, the white dress, and the girlish freshness and sweetness of Dym's whole aspect seemed to strike Mr. Chichester, and he relaxed from his grave mood to say:

"You look very happy, Miss Elliott," before he passed on to give his mother the kiss which he never omitted.

"Any letters for me, mother?"

"Nothing of any consequence, Guy. I looked over them all, and they were simply business notes. Have you had good sport, my dear?"

"Pretty fair. Not much of a bag, after all. Silcote is a poor shot, and Nethecote was not there. Well, as I have ten minutes to spare, I may as well look at them now." And he left the room.

"I think Mr. Chichester looks brighter to-day," hazarded Dym; but Mrs. Chichester only sighed, and the silence was broken at last by the sound of his returning step in the corridor.

This time he strode by Dym without a word.

"Mother, when did this letter come?" he asked, in a tone of suppressed anger.

Dym looked almost as frightened as his mother, as she dropped her knitting and adjusted her eye-glass nervously. There was a dark look on the squire's face, and the veins of his

temples were swollen like whipcord. If eyes ever flashed, his did then.

"Mother, one would think you had never seen the handwriting before," as Mrs. Chichester slowly and painfully inspected it.

"It is so dark," she stammered. "Oh, yes, I see from whom it is now. My dear boy, this was not among the other letters—yes, I am sure of that," speaking eagerly, but with decision.

"You are perfectly certain?"

"Perfectly; this must have come by a later delivery—the three o'clock, no doubt. I never go into the library after the morning, and no one has brought it to me."

"I knew it was that fool Stewart's fault; and he has told me a lie to cover his blunder. This is the second time he has disobeyed my express orders to bring you my letters when I am out. Well, he shall know I am not to be trifled with."

"O Guy, my dear boy, do wait a moment, and let me speak to him."

"Why, mother?" very haughtily.

"You are so hasty, dear; and I know he will be too frightened and sorry to say anything. There, he is gone," as the squire merely walked out of the room with an additional frown on his face. "Oh, what shall I do?" she continued, clasping her hands in distress, and quite oblivious of Dym's presence.

"If Stewart has disobeyed orders, he deserves to be scolded," observed Dym soothingly. "Mr.

Chichester has a right to be vexed at such negligence."

"Vexed! ah, but he will send him away; and Stewart is such a nice lad, and has a widowed mother and six or seven young brothers and sisters. He sends all his wages home to his mother; it will break her heart if Guy sends him away. Oh, what shall I do?" repeated Mrs. Chichester helplessly. "And I promised Stewart I would raise his wages next month for good conduct."

"Perhaps he will only give him a good scolding, and let him stay," suggested Dym; but Mrs. Chichester shook her head.

"You don't know Guy. I never knew him hard on a first offence; but he rarely passes over a second; and he so hates disobedience!"

"Was the letter so important, then?"

"I don't know; I suppose he thinks so. If it had been any one else's letter, he might not have noticed it so; but now—no, it is all over with Stewart."

Dym was afraid this was the case when she saw Stewart's face at dinner; the poor lad's eyes were swollen with crying, and his hands quite shook when he handed the plates. She heard him blubbering out the whole tale after dinner into the ear of his sympathizing mistress.

Mrs. Chichester went into the library afterwards, and had a long talk with her son; but she came out with an agitated face, and told Dym her intercession for the culprit had been fruitless.

"He has given him only a week's notice; and the poor boy is so reckless that he declares he will enlist rather than go home and face his mother. I don't think I ever saw Guy so put out before; he will not hear a word."

Dym listened quite scared to this fresh revelation of the squire's character. Could this be Grace Dunster's hero—the man who tended Ned Smithers—who could grieve so tenderly over a dead babe? Strange inconsistency of a great nature warped and disturbed by passion! She little knew, though his mother guessed, that poor Stewart was only the scapegoat of another's fault. She could find nothing comforting to say as Mrs. Chichester sat down and cried softly in sheer vexation and pity. The eyes that were too brave to weep over their approaching blindness could shed tears over a servant-lad's trouble.

"He must not go," she said at last, wiping her eyes. "He is a good boy, and never told a lie before; and I promised his mother to look after him."

"But what can we do?" asked Dym, disconsolately, "if Mr. Chichester is so unjust, and will not allow you to plead for him?"

Mrs. Chichester's answer was singular.

"Oh, no, you must not say that; he is never unjust; my boy is never unkind unless these moods are on him. Ah, well, my dear, it is no use talking; to-morrow we will go and see Honor."

CHAPTER XII.

THE VILLAGE PEACEMAKER.

GOOD sometimes comes out of evil.

Dym derived a crumb of consolation even from Stewart's misfortune. As the quaint old proverb hath it, "It is an ill wind that blows no one any good."

"I shall see Honor again," was her first waking thought the next morning, as she puzzled out of a labyrinth of dreams to find a fresh September wind blowing over the sunny terraces, and "the last rose of summer" tapping softly against her window pane.

That evening at Nidderdale Cottage seemed full of far-off sweetness in the retrospect—a confusion of lilies, moonlight, and low-toned talk. Some "long drawn out chord of sympathy" never ceased to vibrate strangely in the girl's heart at the mere mention of Honor's name. Sometimes a chance speech from the squire or a trick of his voice brought her vividly before her. The odd abruptness, the undercurrent of deep feeling, the slow vein of mingled thought and satire, now dreamy, now breaking into full current of speech—all returned again and again

to Dym's memory. Her interest had been strongly excited—to tell the truth, she was secretly wearying to see Miss Nethecote's face again.

But since the village flower-show they had never met. Twice a day on Sundays Dym had caught sight of a pure Greek profile and grey-silk dress in a little side pew appropriated to the female singers; for the vicar, in spite of his High-Church proclivities, had not yet succeeded in organizing a trained choir, though report whispered that a few ploughmen and farmers' lads were being secretly drilled by the vicar and Miss Nethecote in a far-off barn, not a great distance from Nidderdale Cottage.

In default of white surplices and boy-choristers, the choir stalls remained suggestively empty, and the cantori side was distantly represented by the miller's stalwart sons, an harmonious blacksmith, and the baker's assistant, who was fictitiously supposed to have the purest bass in the village; while the decani side responded in a variety of sweet trebles, led by Miss Nethecote's fine soprano.

Dym sat with Mrs. Chichester in the squire's pew, which commanded a good view of the chancel and vacant stalls; the squire himself preferred occupying one of the free seats near the door; he always sat on a bench in company with Dame Ford, and an old patriarch in a smock-frock, who looked about a hundred, and was only sixty-five, and toothless. Dym, feeling faint one Sunday, and sitting in the cool porch

a while to recover herself, saw the patriarch, with horn spectacles on nose, looking over the squire's big book and whining out a dreary falsetto. How rich and full Guy's tones sounded by contrast!

Dym marvelled not a little over this whim of the squire's.

"Does not St. James tell us to have no respect of persons?" he returned gravely, when Dym had hazarded some inquiry as to this curious choice of seat. "Though I am a Broad Churchman, Miss Elliott, I am all for free and open churches. There is no rank in religion, and for myself I would as soon go to heaven with the dame and old Martin as with your titled folks."

"Is that why you sit near the door?" asked Dym, with unusual boldness, for she was curious on the subject; but the squire only turned off the question with a jest. He had met them as usual at the bottom of the steps, and had given his mother his arm. It was their custom to linger a moment and exchange greetings and little civilities with their neighbours. "Kindness is cheap; it costs nothing to pat a curly head and ask after mother, and you have no idea how popular it makes one," he said once, laughing. Sometimes some wee toddling mite would run out from the group of school-children, and clasp the squire round the knee; if the cheeks were clean and rosy, there were kisses and halfpence as well as pats; but they always left him if they caught sight of Honor. Miss Nethecote

always came out last with her brother, and the children clustered round her like bees round their queen—boys as well as girls. Honor would take a chubby hand or two and walk on swiftly —she never volunteered more than a smile and a nod to the squire's party as she passed.

"You shall have plenty of lollipops if you will stay with me," the squire said once to a little village beauty that he much affected; she had come running to him over the graves with her red hood down on her neck and her fair hair streaming. "You will stay with me, Susie, wont you?" But Susie would not.

"I'll give 'ee a kiss, but I must go to Nanny-goat"—for thereto had Miss Nethecote's name degenerated on baby lips. "Great mammie, tell he to put Susie down."

"She is always wild to go to the good lady, Mr. Chitterful," explained Dame Ford, apologetically, for Susie was her grandchild.

"Faithless Susie, like the rest of your fair sex," quoth the squire, as he put her down gently from his arms. "There, run away, you baby." "Red riding-hood" Susie had hold of the grey silk after that, and trotted confidingly along, chattering in her broken baby dialect to Honor.

"It is well to be Squire Chitterful—do you admire Dame Ford's pronunciation, Miss Elliott? —but it is better to be 'the good lady,' isn't it now?"

Evidently Miss Nethecote heard him, for she coloured high as she passed on. Dym found out afterwards that Miss Nethecote was chiefly known

by this name in the village; and certainly the contest for popularity between the two might have run hot and high. Perhaps the balance was in Honor's favour. "You see the squire have moods, and Miss Nethecote have none," as an old almsman once expressed it.

Dym danced away to fetch her hat on the morning in question, when Mrs. Chichester had again reiterated her determination to call on Miss Nethecote. She listened with a sort of wonderment as she heard her tell Stewart to take the lower road, and to be sure not to drive by the five-acre field, where the squire was shooting. "Was she afraid of the guns, or did she wish her visit to Nidderdale to be kept a secret from her son?" Dym had to keep her curiosity to herself. Mrs. Chichester's face this morning did not invite confidence—there was a pained, anxious expression upon it, and the same tired look about the eyes, as though she had passed another wakeful night.

During the drive she scarcely spoke, and seemed so lost in thought that she quite started when the carriage stopped, and Dym said, "We are just in time, for Miss Nethecote has only this moment ridden up to the door."

Miss Nethecote saw them at once. She quickly dismounted, and throwing the reins over her horse's neck, gathered up her long habit in one hand, and walked quietly towards the carriage, the mare following her like a dog. There was a pleased smile of recognition as she saw

Dym, and then she passed round to Mrs. Chichester's side of the carriage.

"Good morning, Mrs. Chichester; you do not often pay me such early morning visits. Will you come in?—Humphrey is in the orchard."

"No, thank you," returned Mrs. Chichester; then in an embarrassed tone, "my business is to you, Honor."

Honor nodded in a perfectly business-like way, and then motioned Stewart aside.

"What is wrong?" she asked, in a clear low voice, as though it were an every-day occurrence for Mrs. Chichester to drive up and tell her her troubles. She stood perfectly silent, with her hand on the carriage-door, while Mrs. Chichester whispered a long story in her ear. Dym, who could hardly catch a word, looked on in curious admiration and wonder. What a picture Honor was, standing under the trees in her blue habit and shady hat and feathers, the mare lipping her skirt daintily all the while in search of concealed sugar!

"You must wait, Hagar, my beauty," said her mistress tenderly once, as Mrs. Chichester grew hot and faltered over her narrative. The poor lady wiped away a few more tears of distress and humiliation.

"You must be in trouble indeed," returned Honor, looking at her steadily, when she had finished.

"I am; I would not have had this happen for worlds."

"I mean you must be in a sore strait to send for me," observed Miss Nethecote, in a meaning tone, at which Mrs. Chichester coloured up like a girl.

"I thought you would help me," she pleaded.

Miss Nethecote knit her white brows over the deprecatory tone.

"Have I ever refused to help you, Mrs. Chichester?"

"God forbid! I mean, what should we do if you denied or grew tired of us?"

"I wish I were," was the singular answer. "Well, Mrs. Chichester, what do you want me to do?"

"Change your dress and come home with me."

"Impossible!"

"Oh, Honor!"

A grave inscrutable smile came over Miss Nethecote's face.

"I cannot belie my name and break my word, can I? I have promised to take luncheon with Mrs. Grey."

"Come afterwards; come up to dinner—we shall be quite alone this evening."

"I must have Humphrey for my *vis-à-vis*, then."

"Very well."

"And I must make another condition—you must leave Miss Elliott with me."

Mrs. Chichester looked at Dym's happy face a little suspiciously.

"I can't spare her, Honor," somewhat uneasily.

"As you please," was the careless answer.

"Do you really want her?" in a relenting tone.

"I have made up my mind not to want anything in this world, Mrs. Chichester."

"Well, well, I ought not to refuse such a trifling favour. I am getting a crabbed old woman with my troubles. Guy is a dear boy; but he is a great care to me."

"Most dear boys are," somewhat dryly.

"But you will do your best for Stewart to-night, Honor?"

"I have promised," was the laconic answer.

"Guy is a little difficult just now. I hope you will not have hard work, my dear."

"I can't cheat myself into any such pleasing belief. If there be one thing the squire loathes as poison, it is a lie."

"But Stewart never said anything false before."

"Well, that is in his favour, certainly. I suppose, as the mischief lies at my door—my letter being the unfortunate apple of discord—I must do my utmost to rectify it; but I will not imitate Stewart's falsehood. The business was of the utmost importance."

"So I feared," answered Mrs. Chichester.

"A lad down our way was in sad trouble. I told the squire all about it in my letter, and begged him to be lenient to the culprit. If he had known all the particulars, as I do, or even half"—here Honor's mouth grew stern—"he would hardly have committed the poor boy to

prison for a petty theft, a first offence, and half-broken his brother's heart. Stewart's stupid blunder has brought terrible grief to a respectable family."

"To be sure, Guy was in court yesterday. This is worse than I thought, Honor; no wonder Guy was so angry."

"He knew how grieved I should be; one of my Sunday scholars too—such a promising lad;" and actually a tear rolled down Miss Nethecote's face as she spoke. I would have gone into court and begged him off myself, only I was down with Jane Travers, who was suddenly taken worse. Never mind, Mrs. Chichester; poor George must bear his penalty now."

"My dear Honor, I had no idea of this," and Mrs. Chichester took her hand kindly; but Miss Nethecote quietly withdrew it.

"Things will go wrong sometimes; but I don't see that Stewart need suffer as well as poor George. Now, Miss Elliott, jump out, please. I don't think we need detain Mrs. Chichester any longer."

"How quick you are to dismiss me, Honor!" exclaimed Mrs. Chichester, mournfully.

Miss Nethecote opened her lips as though to answer, and then the grey eyes suddenly filled up with tears, and she turned away.

"Good-bye, Honor; you will not be late?"

"Good-bye!" was the sole reply vouchsafed by Miss Nethecote; she bowed quite gravely in answer to Mrs. Chichester's parting smile and wave of her hand. She curved one arm round

the mare's neck and leaned on it somewhat heavily; Dym heard her draw a heavy sigh of relief as the carriage rolled along the sunny road, and then she turned on her quite gaily.

"'Something attempted, something done, hath earned a night's repose.' I love that glorious old blacksmith for that one speech. Isn't life a patchwork, Miss Elliott?" linking her arm in hers and leading the way to the house. "Every day there is a fresh bit to put in—a star here, a cross there."

"What an idea!" laughed Dym, joyously. There were the little lawn, the apple-trees, the lilies, the doves cooing on the roof; through the open door she could see great flecks of purple shadow on the grass; the cows had taken refuge in the orchard, the geese came waddling up with outstretched necks to the back door.

"Oh, how delicious! How glad I am to be here again!" cooed Dym in unison with them. How happy you must be to live in such a little paradise!"

"Are earthly paradises free from briers and nettles? Tut, Miss Elliott; you are too imaginative. To-day I only see cows and grass; the lilies struggle up like weeds. I am still thinking of my patchwork."

"You are fretting over that poor boy, you mean," returned Dym softly. They were standing in the porch, and Miss Nethecote was feeding the mare with the long-coveted dainty.

"Why will not bits of sugar make us happy?" moralized Miss Nethecote—she was evidently in

no mood for sympathy. "The worst of patchwork is, one cannot always fit one's pieces; our bit of stuff is three-cornered when we want it square."

"We can shape it to our liking, I suppose?" returned Dym, trying to enter into the humour of the thing.

"Cut and snip it to pieces, I suppose you mean. Ah, well"—sighing—"I shall have some tough work to-night. Now, Hagar, my darling, sweets to the sweet, but moderation in all things; my pocket is empty. Miss Elliott, my mare never loves her corn so much as when I feed her myself; so while I attend to her, and change my dress, you may as well bestow your company on Humphrey, who is smoking his pipe under the orchard wall."

So Dym wandered over the field, and found her way into a tiny orchard, where she saw the well-known shooting coat and straw hat, in company with a small grey dog, who ran forward, barking furiously, and then changing his mind, sat up and looked foolish.

"Why, this is not—yes, it is—Kiddle-a-wink?"

Kiddle-a-wink cocked one ear, and begged till he scented rabbits, and exchanging the pathetic for the practical, disappeared down a neighbouring warren, the fag end of a grey tail wagging in mid air.

"Why is Kiddle-a-wink here?" she asked, as Humphrey came up and shook hands; "he is Mr. Chichester's dog."

"My sister would beg to differ from you, Miss

Elliott; there is a great difference between was and is: he is Honor's property now."

"I thought Mr. Chichester was so fond of him."

"Kiddle-a-wink unfortunately took a great fancy to Honor, and would follow her about anywhere in preference to his master; so the squire told her one day she had better keep him. Kiddle-a-wink was as bad as little Susie Ford last Sunday."

"Every one seems to love Miss Nethecote," returned Dym musingly; and then, as she walked under the sunny wall with Humphrey, she related to him the history of last night; poor Stewart's misfortune, the squire's wrath, and Mrs. Chichester's unavailing intercession.

"Why does she think your sister will have more influence with the squire?" asked the girl curiously; she was growing very confidential with this simple, honest Yorkshireman. She began to understand that, in spite of his plainness, he was a man one could respect and trust; during these weeks she had often met him in the village, and had learnt to prattle fearlessly to him when he turned and walked back to Ingleside with her.

There was a curious mingling of good nature and gentleness in the tone in which he always answered her. Dym was never quite sure that he did not regard her as a child, and look down on her from the unanswerable altitude of middle age. He would stave off awkward questions like the present with a gruff "Ay, ay, young maidens are always curious;" or "Come, come, you did

not mean me to answer that now;" and elevate his eyebrows in such droll perplexity that Dym could only laugh.

Once when, in somewhat bad taste, Dym persisted in pressing him on some point, he patted her gently on the shoulder with his great hand, and said soothingly, "Nay, nay, Miss Elliott, I'm a plain man; one doesn't like to use a downright No to a lady, so be a sensible girl and don't ask me any more;" and Dym for a long time after that felt like a scolded child.

But he never checked her long girlish preambles, and on the present occasion smoked his pipe in profound gravity while Dym told her story; and when she repeated her question a second time, "Why does she think your sister will have more influence with the squire?" he drew a long whiff, and muttered, "It is not thinking; she knows it;" and then in his usual manner:

"Bless me, Miss Elliott, don't you know the Duchess can do what she likes? Haven't you found out yet who is the village peacemaker, and the Lady Bountiful of the whole place?"

"I suppose it is your sister."

"Honor—of course it is Honor. From Dame Ford to the squire there is not one of them that can do without her. Bless her, they know what a noble heart she has. There is not a lady in the land that can compete with her.

Humphrey's hearty enthusiasm was very pleasant to Dym. She gave a sympathizing smile, and waited for him to go on.

"From the moment she grew up to be a woman, and almost before, nothing would do but Honor—Honor. I never knew the time when a child would not run to her and hide its head in her lap. I have seen the very babies try to clamber out of their mothers' arms to get to her. I suppose there is something winsome in her very face."

"That is what I have felt," returned Dym thoughtfully; and then Humphrey took another whiff and went on.

"I don't believe that there is ever a man, woman, or child taken sick for miles round that Honor is not sent for. The number of death-beds she has attended is astonishing. I have seen her come home from a child's funeral looking as pitiful almost as the poor mother. She is gossip, as they call it, to half the babies in the place. She adopted a whole family once."

"She must be very good," sighed Dym.

"Ay, 'the good lady,' as they call her. Talking of every one wanting Honor, did you ever hear of Gammer Jebbs' girl?" and as Dym replied in the negative, Mr. Nethecote indulged in a hearty laugh at the reminiscence before he explained himself.

"It certainly shows no one can do without her. Well, it was one desperately cold night in January. We had had a rare snow-storm that day, and our field, and even the garden walks, were a foot deep in snow. I was just enjoying a first sweet sleep—it was not long past midnight—when something hard thrown up to my

window roused me; and as this was repeated again and again, I had a vague idea—being only half awake—that some school-boy was indulging in a practical jest, and throwing snow-balls at my window, and in some wrath I thrust my head out and asked who was there.

"You must know, Miss Elliott, my window looks over the outer wall and towards the road, and what with the intense whiteness and the faint glimmer of starlight, I could just see a stooping figure under the wall, evidently preparing a fresh missile for the disturbance of my slumbers.

"'Who are you?' I shouted out in my gruffest tones, for a man does not like to be woke out of a first sleep.

"'I'm Tabby — Gammer Jebbs' girl,' came up in shrill tones.

"'And what do you want, Gammer Jebbs' girl?' I demanded still more wrathfully.

"'I want t' mistress,' was the undaunted response. 'I shied up at t' winder, but I didn't know it was yourn, maister. Grannie wants t' mistress particular.'

"'Any one sick, Tabby?' I asked, rather more gently; for it was not a new thing for Honor now and then to be roused for the sake of a dying child, and I knew Gammer Jebbs was rather a favourite with the Duchess. 'Grandmother is not ill, is she?'

"'Grannie's purely, maister, but t' coo is mighty bad; and grannie, she says, "Tabby," she says, "just put on thy hood, lass, and run t'

mistress. If we do naught till daybreak the poor beast will die. She gave me plenty of good stuff last year that cured feyther's rheumatiz—so maybe she will think of somethin' for Daisy." So please will mistress come and see grannie's coo?' Rather a cool request, was it not?"

"Did you wake your sister, after all?"

"Honor was awake, and was enjoying the fun immensely; but not being a veterinary surgeon, of course she knew nothing of 't' coo.' I had to go myself."

"What, through the snow, and in the middle of the night?"

"Would you have had me leave the poor beast to die? You would not do for a farmer's wife, Miss Elliott. I spent a good two hours in the shed, and never felt happier than when the poor thing got up on its legs again; it is hard to see these dumb creatures suffer."

"There is your sister," returned Dym, running forward to meet her; but Kiddle-a-wink was be-before her, and was jumping and barking round her like a mad thing. Miss Nethecote took him up and caressed him as she talked.

"Whither away, Duchess?"

"Down to Woodside, with Miss Elliott."

"Perhaps Miss Elliott would prefer a quiet luncheon here," suggested Humphrey.

"Miss Elliott has had sufficient luxury at Ingleside; she must make herself useful, and help me carve for the children. Come, Miss Elliott, you shall have your choice, a *tête-à-tête* meal with Humphrey, or a noisy luncheon with

half a dozen riotous children, and an overtasked maid-of-all-work to wait on you?"

"Your picture is not inviting, but I will certainly go with you," replied Dym, who felt truly that she was allowed no choice in the matter; but how she did long for a quiet day at the cottage and another cosy talk with Honor!

"My sister is determined to make you a martyr as well as herself. No one understands her infatuation for Mrs. Grey, not even her husband, poor man! Duchess!"

"Well, Humphrey."

"I have put in some fine juicy plums and pears to go with your new-laid eggs—I suppose you have not forgotten your usual posy?"

"As though I should forget it when flowers are Esther's chief pleasures! Keep Kiddle-a-wink, please, Humphrey; he makes such riot with the children."

"Ay, ay," replied Humphrey; but he stood idle a long time in the doorway, watching his sister and Miss Elliott disappear down the road, before he turned in at the gate with a sigh.

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